

## CHAPTER VI

### YOGA OF THE SELF

Sri Krishna begins this chapter with a definition of Sanyasa, as if He thought to give here an answer to Arjuna's question on the subject which he put at the beginning of the last chapter.

1. He who performs an action that is enjoined (like the nitya-karma of the Vedic religion) without attachment to its fruit is the true Sanyasi and Yogi ; not he who (merely) gives up the (sacrificial) fire and the ritual.

Here 'Sanyasi' and 'Yogi' are used as alike in significance. It is also implied that 'sanyasa' as an asrama (a stage of life, the last of the four traditional stages in a Brahmana's life) has to do with the giving up of the family life where a family sacrificial fire and a daily ritual are kept up as the enjoined duties of a grihasta or family-man, as his nitya-karma, daily religious duty. To give up these duties externally seems to be of no importance, according to this verse. To be unattached to their results is of greater consequence—even when one performs them.

In the next verse a clear declaration is made of the identity between Sanyasa and Yoga, similar to the oneness of Sankhya and Yoga, declared at IV. 4—5 ; yet the author tries to make out some differences which to us appear as more confusing than clarifying the question at issue. The terms used, such as Sanyasa, Yoga,

'Tyaga, Yukta, etc., so quickly change chameleon-like and are so loosely employed that it is difficult to gain a definite idea as to what the author meant. We should think that the various expressions used were those of different schools of thought current in the author's time which he wanted to incorporate into his 'symposium' as best he could. Yet they all seem to have the same meaning.

2. What is called 'Sanyasa,' know it to be 'Yoga.'

One who has not renounced 'sankalpa' (plan-making motive for personal gain) does not become a Yogi (one who knows how to act without being bound thereby).

Here the sanyasa of sankalpa is said to lead to yoga ; it thus consists in renouncing attachment to the fruit of action.

3. For the sage (muni) aspiring to yoga, karma (action) becomes the means. For the sage who has attained yoga, shamah (cessation of activity ?) is said to be the means.

Here is a change in the meaning of the terms, yoga and sanyasa, which is at variance with the idea of their identity indicated in verse 2. There is a needless confusion introduced here by speaking of karma as the means to yoga, whereas in the preceding verse it is the giving up of sankalpa that makes a yogi ! The 'means' and 'results' seem to be jumbled up by such loose use of the terms. We also do not know how 'shamah' (renunciation or cessation) is possible at all.

4. When one is not attached to the objects of the senses or to actions, when no sankalpas are

entertained, then one is said to be a *yoga-arudha*.

What this 'yoga-arudha' does next is not stated. Would he dissolve himself into his 'original nothingness'? We do not seem to be any the wiser for this knowledge. Further, how is this attitude of unattachment different from the Karma-yoga or Buddhi-yoga explained earlier in the Gita? If not different, what is the value of this section of the Gita? The Yogi and the Sanyasi were declared to be the same sort of individual, at the beginning of this chapter. In the light of verses 3 and 4, are we to take it that the author means that the Yogi does actions but with non-attachment and that the Sanyasi does not act at all? How can even a Sanyasi live without being active, and to what purpose? Does the author mean to suggest that a Yogi remains as a grihasta and a Sanyasi gives up that asrama? These verses 3—4 seem to suggest some interference with the text by some unknown hand. From verse 5 on we seem to revert to the ideas expounded in the first two verses of the chapter—though the matter is the same old topic of non-attachment in action. Verses 3 and 4 seem to be the interpolations of some advocate of the Sanyasa asrama (to which the Gita in the main gives no support).

A variety of yoga discipline, (somewhat like that of the Patanjali school), to bring about self-control and stabilise the mind is described from the next verse onwards. The main teaching about action is the same as the Karma-yoga of non-attachment explained earlier, and not any renunciation of action itself (Sanyasa). Action without any personal attachment is the funda-

mental doctrine of the Gita. It is thus that Karma is to be considered as 'means' to yoga—if verse 3 should be given any contextual meaning. Complete renunciation of action (secular duties) is positively discouraged in the Gita.

5. The self (the phenomenal personality) is to be elevated by the Self (the Higher and Universal Self, the reflection of the Cosmic Brahman-Atman in the individual). Let not any one depress (or ill-treat) himself. The Self is the friend of the self, as also its foe.

One attains to "yoga-siddhi" when an at-one-ment is effected with the universal Atman by transcending the limitations of the personal consciousness, "the father and the son becoming one." The pettiness and exclusiveness of our personality should be renounced. Yet it is clearly stated in the verse that the renunciations should not be effected by repressions, self-tortures and other forms of self-inflicted punishments,—which seem to rest on the assumption that the mortification of the flesh such as some fanatical ascetics practise conduces to the glorification of the spirit. The personal self should be regarded with 'parental love' as the means to at-one-ment with the universal Brahman. The Great Self as reflected in each individual is thus the friend of the personal self. If the personal self remains uncurbed and is allowed to run riot with its animal impulses, then the higher Self seems to stand 'opposed' to it as a foe—its 'ideals' of universality standing in contrast to the petty cravings and desires of the lower self, i.e., it is to the lower self that the Higher Self appears as a foe, as the next verse explains.

6. The Self is friend where the self is under Its control (in other words, is conquered). But the unsubdued self (literally the not-self or the prakritic personality) makes a foe of the Self. (That is, the personal or the phenomenal self behaves as the enemy of the Self).

So long as the animal nature is strong in a person, the value of the higher Self or Ego is not recognised by him. He regards 'ideals' with scorn. When these ideals are rightly valued, the lower impulses give way, having been conquered or subdued, and the man thus is a friend of the true Self. This is also the main import of the Sankhyan Viveka of Chapter II.

7. With the personal self that is won over, (that, in other words, does not act under sense impulses or desires, but under the ideals of the higher life like a Karma-yogi) the Supreme Self (Brahman-Atman as reflected in the individual) is ever in union (in harmony, as a friend); the self (thus in union with the Supreme One) is at peace in 'heat and cold,' 'pleasure and pain' as well as in 'honour and dishonour.'

Such is the peace and the blessedness of the person who has touched the consciousness of the Universal, transcending the limitations of the Prakritic or phenomenal self.

8. The yogi (one who is striving to be united to the Universal Atman) is said to be Yukta (Self-harmonised) when he is content with jnana

and vijnana (the synthetic and the analytic types of understanding the world, that we noted earlier), is firm and has subdued his senses. To him a lump of earth, a stone and gold are the same.

9. He excels by his equable mind (balancedness and absence of prejudices), be he situated among lovers, friends, foes or those who are indifferent to him, among relations or strangers, saints or sinners.

Next, from 10 to 32 directions for self-discipline and mind-control (so as to be a harmonised individual or yukta) are given,—apparently in order that the ideal indicated in verses 6 to 9 may be attained.

10. The Yogi, seated in a secluded place should constantly strive for self-discipline, remaining alone, with his thoughts under control, free from desires and covetousness.
11. He should occupy a cleanly place with a fixed seat of his own, neither too highly placed nor too low, made up of cloth, the skin of an antelope and kusa grass spread one over another.
12. There with the mind centred (on the Self) with his thoughts and senses under control, well-seated, he should practise yoga for self-purification.

These directions seem to be some of the traditional practices which the author was incorporating into the 'Gita, so as to make room in his work for all the systems he knew.

13. Holding the body, head and neck erect (without stooping down) and remaining steady without any movement, looking at the tip of his nose, and not allowing his eyes to wander;
14. With the Self at ease, without fear, and remaining firm in his hold on Brahman, with the mind under control and fixed on the Lord, devoted to Him, the person striving for Yoga should remain composed.

Here the term Brahmachari-vrata should not be interpreted in the narrow popular sense of celibacy or continence. Brahmacharya in this narrow sense is irrelevant here, seeing that this teaching is not only addressed to Arjuna, but is intended for every 'grihasta,' as there is no indication either in the Gita or in the lives of the ancient Upanishadic sages that the house-holder is precluded from endeavouring to attain the knowledge of Brahman. It is even open to doubt if a person who has not known grihasta-life will ever be fit to know Brahman, since this asrama alone represents the 'fullness' of human life. And it may even be that Brahman is realised in the grihasta-life alone. It would be a 'renunciation path' and not 'Karma-yoga' if we insisted on interpreting Brahmacharya as compulsory celibacy, even were it biologically possible. Brahmacharya means only the determined assignment of one's life to the one primary object of knowing Brahman. The term originally meant the first asrama in the life of the Dvija in which the Vedas were studied (Veda being one of the meanings of 'Brahman') after the Upanayana ceremony and before entering the married life. The introduction of celibacy as a means to "Yoga" and as

its necessary condition would seem to be an innovation of later times (arising out of an ascetic bias) and is accidental and not essential. It may have been due to a false analogy between the Brahmacharya asrama (the life of study of the sacred scriptures) and the quest of Brahman by the Yogi, that it is found advocated in yoga-discipline also.

15. The Yogi, thus collected in mind and ever engaged in self-control, attains the highest peace of Nirvana which abides in Me.
16. Yoga is not for one who overeats or abstains altogether from eating ; or for one who sleeps too much or keeps awake too long.

A 'golden mean' is next suggested :

17. Yoga which destroys all sorrow is for one who is moderate in food and play, who is of mild and controlled impulses in action, and whose sleep and wakefulness are within regulated limits.

This indicates that 'Yoga' is for the normal man who is engaged in the usual avocations of life and not the monopoly of the abstainer from the activities of life. Hence a grihasta is as much entitled to practise 'yoga' as any other person. There is also no indication here (in the Gita) that yoga is confined to the Brahmin caste to the exclusion of the rest.

18. When the mind (chitta) so controlled rests in the Self, having no longings (of its own) for desirable objects, the individual is said to be yukta (self-collected and harmonised).

19. Just as a light protected from the wind shines steadily, so also the self of the Yogi remains steady when the mind is controlled and fixed in the Self.

20—25. When the mind is stabilised by the practice of Yoga and rests in peace, when one is pleased in the Self by the perception of the Self in one's self, when he knows the highest bliss which is experienced by the Buddhi, and which is beyond the senses (including the mind), then he remains firm, and unshaken in the Real. And having attained this state, one knows that there is nothing higher, and is not perturbed by even great sorrow. Know this as the Yoga which frees one from every contact with misery. This yoga must be striven for with firm conviction and unflagging determination. Having expunged without exception all the passions arising from personal aims and controlling by the mind all the senses from all sides, step by step one should strive for quietude by one's own Buddhi with firmness; centering the mind, in the Self, let him not think of anything.

All this description indicates a variety of "Raja yoga" or yoga by mental discipline (on which the system of Patanjali seems to have been based). It is distinct from Hatha yoga and other forms of ascetic endeavours for controlling oneself. Raja yoga is intended as a means to attain self-knowledge by which the consciousness of the Self is next to be gained.

- 26—28. Whenever the mind, that is unsteady by its nature, wanders away it should be brought back and steadied in the Self and kept under control (without being allowed to wander). To the Yogi whose mind is thus made to rest in peace, the highest bliss belongs; whose rajasic nature (restlessness) is steadied and who is filled with Brahman and is free from defects. The Yogi whose defects are destroyed and who is ever self-controlled easily attains the transcendent blessedness of contact with Brahman.
29. He whose self is harmonised by Yoga looks with an equal eye on all, seeing the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

This last statement represents the consummation of all knowledge according to Vedanta.

With a view to express this attainment in a more concrete form to suit the needs of the concretely-minded and the devotionally inclined, the Lord says :

- 30—32. He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me, by him I can never be missed and he shall not be lost to Me. He who is established in unity and who adores Me as dwelling in all beings, though he is active in every way (that is, as a Karma-yogi carrying on various activities), he ever remains in Me (by a transcendental at-one-ment in the one God-head). He who looks evenly on all by a parity with himself (*i.e.*, regards all beings as equal to himself) whether in joy or sorrow

(or pleasure or pain) is considered the perfect Yogi.

Arjuna next asks : (rather it is the author himself, as stating the ' purva-paksha ' against the doctrine advocated above, that puts this question into Arjuna's mouth).

33—34. This Yoga which you have described as one to be attained by quietude, I find difficult to maintain on account of (the mind's) restlessness. ' Manas ' is ever moving, impetuous, strong and stiff. I consider it hard to control, even as is the wind.

The Lord answers :

35—36. Undoubtedly the mind which is ever moving is difficult to steady ; but it can be brought under control by practice and by dispassionateness. Yoga is hard to attain by one who is not self-controlled. But by one who is self-controlled it is attainable by well-directed effort.

The yoga that is described in this chapter is only a variety of discipline.

Arjuna next asks :

37—39. If a person who possesses earnestness but whose mind wanders away from yoga and who is not self-controlled fails (after effort) to attain perfection in yoga, what happens to him ? Does he get lost like a broken piece of cloud, losing hold on both sides (this life and the next), having had no established

position and getting perplexed in the path towards Brahman ? This doubt of mine You alone can clear ; there is none other who can do that (because the Lord knows the destinies of all beings).

The Lord answers :

40—43. Such an individual is never lost either in this world or in the next life. No righteous man will ever fall down in the path of progress. Having reached the worlds (heavenly regions) of the righteous and remaining there for long periods, the person who failed in yoga takes birth in the house of the pure and virtuous. He may even be born in a family of yogins. But such a birth is more difficult to obtain in this world. There he gets back the qualities of intelligence of his former body and strives again for perfection.

Sojourn in a heaven for such an individual is in accordance with the traditional beliefs. It would seem to be a "waste of time" for a would-be Yogi to so remain in a heaven ; for, he is not an individual who could have craved for celestial pleasures (for which sacrifices are ordained). Further we might be permitted to state (as our opinion) that no such heaven or hell can exist anywhere as a *separate* region. They are only terms to indicate future life-conditions on the earth itself. The interlude between births must be short, just sufficient to bring about the proper "situation" in which one could be re-born. There can be no time or space consciousness after the body is dead ; at best it can only be a variety of dream consciousness, an entirely

subjective state. The Puranic stories of passage into heaven either after death or (worse still) even in the living body must be either fables or allegories. Nor is a heaven or hell needed as a form of Karmic 'recompense.' We have enough opportunities for recompense either in this or in a subsequent life. We cannot justify duplicated rewards and punishments, once here on earth and again in a heaven or hell. We have already noted that the concept of "Heaven" is only an 'idealisation' of what should ultimately be the *fact* realised in a future, on this earth itself. The Gita in this respect retails only the popular notions of heavens and hells and not ideas that are philosophically justifiable. Heavens and hells are only inventions of popular theologies.

44. By the efforts of his previous life, the individual is irresistably drawn (to resume his endeavour). Even wishing to learn Yoga leads one beyond the world (plane) of Sabda-Brahman.

The second line of the verse may mean, more consistently, that the desire to be a Yogi leads one beyond the cult of Vedic ritual.

45. The Yogi, striving with assiduity, purified of all defects and getting perfect by a series of births, reaches the Path that is beyond.

This 'path that is beyond,' so frequently referred to in the Gita, is the mystery that is yet to be understood. It is not itself Mukti but that which leads one to that state where 'to be' is to realise 'eternity.' It is 'ideally' the Abode which the Lord speaks of as His own 'place' (Dharma) where His devotees are united.

in Him. It should not however be taken as a definite spot in space existing now somewhere far far away beyond the Sun !

46. The Yogi is superior to the ascetics ; he is considered even superior to the Jnanis (used here apparently to refer to those who have only intellectual apprehension of the unity of Brahman and not direct knowledge) ; he is also greater than the doers of (Vedic) karma. Therefore be thou a Yogi.

The comparisons do not seem to be happy ; because, we should understand 'yoga,' in the sense the term is used here, as a *means* to jnana in the real sense, as a discipline, and not as an end in itself.

47. Of the yogis (i.e., those who strive to know Brahman) he who is full of faith and adores Me, with his Self resting in Me, is to be considered the most harmonised.

Here the 'Me' which Sri Krishna speaks of must be taken as only a concrete 'substitute,' for purposes of meditation or bhakti, for the impersonal Brahman or God-head.

This chapter is called Adhyatma Yoga, knowledge pertaining to the Self, though it treats more of yoga discipline than of the Self.

## CHAPTER VII

### JNANA YOGA

Sri Krishna in this chapter continues the discussion of the topic with which the last one ended, *viz.*, the yogi who seeks in and through Him the highest self-harmony.

1. How, with the mind fixed in Me and taking refuge in Me, one striving for yoga knows Me fully without any uncertainty, learn it from Me.
2. I will declare to you jnana along with vijnana in their completeness ; which being understood there is nothing more one needs to know.
3. Only one in a thousand men strives for siddhi (perfection). Of those who thus strive, one may know Me really.

The average man seeks only the satisfaction of desires, his turn of mind being what is called 'pravritti' (outward-directed) and not 'nivritti' (directed inward to the Self).

Next are enumerated the fundamental constituents of the cosmos in its discrete character, both material and psychic, under eight headings. This classification might represent the primitive form of Sankhya before the development of its 24 'categories.'

Thus,

4. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, buddhi and

ahankara (the principle of individualisation) are the eight elements of My Prakriti.

The first five are the material and the other three are the psychic 'fundamentals' of our psycho-physical constitution. A more elaborate form of the Sankhyan analysis is given at XIII. 5.

5. This (eightfold Prakriti) is the lower (that is, that of forms). Know My other nature, the 'higher' (para), the life principle of all beings (in the cosmos) by which the universe is upheld.

Here is a mention made of the important principle of continuity, of life-consciousness by which the whole world of different elements is conceived as bound into one unity and without which a 'cosmos' would not be possible at all. This very important factor as the synthesising principle of the universe represents, probably, the Pradhana 'Avyakta' of the Sankhyas (which is omitted in the enumeration here). To merely enumerate the discrete factors without co-ordinating them into a unity by the use of a principle of unity within which the variety can have a meaning, a whole in which the parts obtain significance in and through the whole, would be like the attempt to twist the loose sand into a rope. The Gita doctrine, by the postulate of Para Prakriti, does well to get over the metaphysical difficulty of understanding the unity and continuity of the cosmos. The phenomenon of consciousness is also to be looked on as an aspect of Para Prakriti, which is, as well, the source of the manifestations of all forms of 'physical energy.' Whether as life or consciousness or energy, Para Prakriti functions as the principle of unity-continuity by

which the world is conceived as one, whereas the "forms" are discontinuous.

6. Understand that this (Para prakriti) is the source of all beings. I am the cause of the going forth of the whole universe as well as its end.

7. There is nothing whatsoever that is beyond Me. All this world of beings exists strung within Me like so many gems on a string.

Next is given a short list of the Lord's various "excellences" (vibhutis) as the "essences" of things. They constitute the ramifications of His Daivi (Para) Prakriti, as the fundamental qualities of things. If the lower (apara) prakriti represents the (discontinuous) 'matter' of the world, the higher (Para) Prakriti represents their qualitative source. Of course neither by our modern science nor by our ordinary knowledge can we explain how 'qualitative evolution' takes place. From what is stated here of the Para Prakriti we might presume that it contains the secret of the origination of qualities both in the simple elements and in the compounds.

8—15. I (as Para Prakriti) am the taste of the watery element; the light of the luminaries, the sun and the moon; the syllable AUM (Pranava) of the Vedas; the sound of the akasa (ether-space) element; the manliness of men; the fragrance (odour) of the earth (element) and the luminosity of the fire element; the life of all living beings and the austerities of the ascetics. Know Me as the

One eternal seed\* (germ) of all beings.. I am the wisdom of the wise and the splendour of the splendid. I am the vigour of the strong that is devoid of lust and passion ; I am the sex-impulse in all beings that is not against the law (or desire that is not against the moral order). All the modes of things, whether harmonious (satvic), changing (rajasic) or inert (tamasic), issue forth from Me. But I am not in them. They lie within Me. The whole world is deluded by these three modes and knows Me not who am beyond these, the Imperishable One. This Divine Maya of Mine that is difficult to pierce and is characterised by these three modes, those only who reach Me are able to pass through. The evil-doers, the fools, the lowest of men, do not reach Me, their intellect being obscured by Maya, and their nature being asuric (tending to pride and cruelty, as explained at XVI. 4.).

*Maya* is a much misused word. It is generally associated with the theory of 'knowledge' known as Mayavada which the Vedantins of the school of Sankara employ to account for and explain the objective world of multiplicity. According to this school the world of sense perception appearing as a reality by itself is due to an error arising from 'Maya' which is taken as an indescribable and eternal something almost co-eval with

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\* The 'seed' apparently represents the principle of organic continuity described by modern biologists as the undying germ-plasm, cf. X-39 and VII-10.

Brahman, and affecting all finite jivas. It is due to this 'principle,' they say, that a 'superimposition' on the One Reality of Brahman is made by the ignorant individual jiva, by which there arises the *appearance* of the world of variety as an external reality obscuring the unity of Brahman. Since the attribution of complexity does violence to the absolute unity of Brahman, the appearance of variety is taken as an error, and thus the objective world itself is condemned as an illusion. Such an attempt to *explain* away the objective world will, however, be found to be but another illusion! The Maya-vada when developed to its logical limit will only destroy itself. To support it we have to make many unwarranted assumptions of other 'realities' than Brahman, besides this mysterious Maya, such as (1) a plurality of individual jivas as 'others' to Brahman, (2) subjective notions which these individuals superimpose on Brahman, and their unaccounted source, (3) absence of 'motive' for so superimposing them, (4) the inexplicable uniformity and orderliness in the system of such superimposed ideas making up our physical world-order, etc. To attempt by such devices to explain away plurality for maintaining the unity of Brahman is like driving out by the doorway what we allow in again by the window. We should, on the contrary, try to understand the unity of Brahman without any resort to a theory of the world as an *Illusion* or 'maya,' and also interpret the concept 'Maya' in an intelligible and positive sense. We should not lead ourselves into a metaphysical *impasse*. 'Brahman' is Itself the conception of the unity of both the subjective and the objective aspects of reality without either being in anyway unreal or illusory; It is the idea of both the

Subject and the Object being ever-at-one. Brahman is a-dvitiya ; there is no 'other' to It. Our finite mentality, due to our taking only an objective or 'externalist' standpoint of space-time relations, obscures the internal unity of all in Brahman, the 'pravrittic' view preventing the 'nivrittic' insight. With the development of the internal perception of the Spirit, the 'dualism' of matter and spirit vanishes. To know Brahman is to *know* that all is One ; it is to *be* one, and to experience that the consciousness of otherness (to which we are now subject, as finite beings with merely an external outlook) is not ultimate. There are not two realities, Brahman and Maya. There cannot be two varieties of existence, the real and the unreal (Vide II. 16), absolute non-existence being only a self-contradiction. It is the one manifest Reality that is at once both the life-consciousness or 'subject' and the time-space infinity of extensiveness or 'object.' The limited vision of the finite consciousness blinds us to the fact of the unity of all in Brahman, giving us only partial and piece-meal presentations of what, in truth, is absolutely one. Maya is not a real or an entity beside Brahman ; it is a term to indicate the mode of experiencing reality purely from an external or form aspect of things. To know truly we should know both the *in* and the *out* of any being, both as a living and conscious subject as well as a form-object. Spirit and matter are only two names for the two views of reality, the *intensive* and the *extensive* aspects of all things.\*

\* The *ultimate* of matter and spirit is the same *Fact* known as Avyakta, whether called Pradhana or Brahman, the difference in names being only indicative of the double nature of its function,—the building of objective forms and the working of the informing life. That is why, as with the concept of Nirguna Brahman, we cannot

They cannot be separated without being destroyed at the same time. It is this same fact, later on explained in the Gita, that is indicated by the statement that the whole world is the result of the eternal co-existence of Prakriti and Purusha, or Kshetra and Kshetrajna. Maya is thus seen to be that aspect of Reality which is the basic principle of form-building, externalisation, objectification or space-time manifestation, while Purusha as Iswara would represent the life and consciousness of all beings. Hence Maya is also described as the creative 'power' of the Spirit. The One becomes the Twain, and the Twain become the many in order that the 'Will-to-be-many' may manifest itself as the world.

The truly epistemological and metaphysical value of the concept of Maya is that so long as one does not understand things from the inner unitary point of view, but considers only their external and discontinuous appearance-aspect, one misses knowing how one is rooted in Brahman ; he thus gets affected by the pains and privations of finite life, such as dependence, decay and death, arising from a wrong perspective of reality. For getting over bondage (Karma-bandha) and attaining real freedom there is no ethical precondition other than living up to the ideal of the unity of all in Brahman, nor any other knowledge but that Brahman is both the Life and the Form of every being, animate or inanimate.

#### 16—19. The righteous men who worship Me come

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attribute any 'qualities' to that ultimate 'matter' though the quality-bearing material 'elements' have evolved out of it. The realisation by oneself of the fundamental unity of 'spirit' and 'matter' in one's body-organism will thus appear as the one great lesson of all experience-knowledge and the attainment of true freedom or M<sup>u</sup>kta.

under four categories. They are those who are suffering (from the evils of the world), those who seek enlightenment, those who desire the good things of the world and the jnanis (sages). Of these the jnani, ever-harmonised and with single-minded devotion, is the best. He is supremely dear to Me as I am to him. All these (four kinds of worshippers) are noble; but I hold the sage as verily Myself. He is self-collected and fixed in Me as the highest goal. After many lives, the sage reaches Me holding that Vasudeva is all. Such a sage, the great soul, is a rarity. ('Vasudeva' means here the 'Soul of the world').

20. Those whose intelligence is deluded by 'desires' approach other gods (who are concerned with their fulfilment) by means of the requisite observances, according to their own prakriti (nature).
21. Everyone who wishes with faith to worship any aspect of divinity obtains from Me alone that unwavering faith.

This may be read with verse 11 of Chapter IV.

22. Endowed with the requisite faith, the devotee who worships a particular deity obtains the fulfilment of his desires from him; but I am the real giver of the fruit.

The minor gods are the agents of Iswara for the distribution of Karmic fruits.

23. But such rewards are finite. They are for those of small understanding. The worshippers of the gods go to them ; and My devotees reach Me.
24. The fools regard Me, the Unmanifest, as though manifested (limited by manifestation). They do not know My Supreme nature, imperishable and unexcelled.

This may be a reference to such unwise men as the Kauravas who took Sri Krishna for a son of Vasudeva of the Yadu clan, a mere man like themselves.

25. Enveloped in My own Yoga-Maya (the power of manifestation) I am not discovered by all and sundry. This foolish world knows Me not as the Un-born and the Un-decaying.
26. I know all beings, past, present and future. But none of them knows Me.
27. By the confusion caused by the pairs of opposites arising from attractions and repulsions, all beings are deluded at their birth.
28. But those of good deeds whose sins are ended, who are liberated from the delusion of dualities, worship Me with firm devotedness.
29. Those who strive, taking refuge in Me, for freedom from age and death, shall know 'That' (Brahman) as well as everything pertaining to the Self (Atman) and Karma in its entirety.
30. Those who know Me as the source of knowledge of the world of elements (or beings), as

also of the world of gods and of yajna (sacrifice), shall verily know Me even at the time of their death, well harmonised in their minds.

These last two verses are somewhat obscure. They might indicate the highest ideal of knowledge that man is capable of by which he becomes 'divine' in nature, when *decay* and *death* cannot touch him. Unfortunately these verses are not further explained, being suddenly introduced here at the very end of the chapter, and summarily disposed of in three verses in the next chapter as though the mere dictionary meaning of the words could enlighten us ! They may represent an ancient cult or 'vidya' of which we have no tradition now. It is rather curious that there should be a reference in 29, not to a mukti obtainable only *after death*, nor to a cessation of rebirths, but only to *freedom from decay and death*. The omissions are rather suggestive of the forgotten Vidya. Presumably the ideal here on earth is to conquer decay and death when the problem of rebirth disappears of itself. The 'ideal' knowledge being that of Brahman, its 'realisation' can only be in *remaining eternal* in all phases of existence. It must be a pre-mortem achievement and not a "hope" of realisation in the post-mortem state. This aspect of the problem is left out in the next chapter; instead, we have there a long exposition on to how to die so as not to return—what an ironic contrast between these two 'ideals' of human destiny !

## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE INDESTRUCTIBLE BRAHMAN

Arjuna naturally asks for an elucidation of the new terms introduced :

1—2. What is 'That' Brahman; what are Adhyatma and Karma ; and what is it that is called Adhibhuta and what is it that is spoken of as Adhidaiva ? Who in this body is Adhiyajna and how ? How are You to be known by the self-controlled at the time of their leaving the body ?

The question on Adhiyajna seems somewhat to assume the nature of the answer. The prefix 'adhi' means a knowledge pertaining to the term used in relation thereto.

The Lord answers :

3. The Indestructible Supreme (One) is Brahman. 'Swabhava' is Adhyatma (*i.e.*, knowledge about the Atman or Brahman as Atma, and not of Nature or Prakriti of the Sankhyas). The impulsion by which the birth of beings takes place is known as Karma.

This last remark also shows, as we have noted elsewhere, that Karma primarily is the name for the process of 'Cosmic evolution' in which the individual Jiva's part is only minor and secondary.

4. Adhi-bhuta is the perishable world (of beings existing in time as opposed to eternity). Adhi-daivata is the Purusha (Jiva-Atmas). In this body (of Mine) I am the Adhi-yajna.\*

These 'explanations' of the terms seem almost literal renderings. But when we come to the three terms, Adhyatma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva, (apart from the interpretations given here as having to do with 'a knowledge' of Atma, Bhuta and Daiva), we are reminded of the three varieties of human miseries (tapa-trayas). How such different kinds of connotation arose and when, we do not know. The Gita meanings represent the varieties of true Jnana which one desiring liberation should obtain, (the prefix 'adhi' indicating such interpretation) and are probably more correct than those of the later Sankhya School of thought.

The last item, how one should fasten one's mind on the Lord to reach Him after death, is elaborated in the subsequent verses, while the more important topics indicated by the other terms are left off without any further comment. Considering the shortness of this chapter, we must suppose that there were verses containing more information on these topics which have since been lost.

We fail to see why so much should be made of the moment of death or even of death, when one can easily understand that the 'ideal' of immortality can have no meaning or value if death should be *absolute*. We might as well give up any ideal that speaks of achieving

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\* These two, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajna, seem to refer to the Vedic story of the Sacrifice of the Great Purusha to bring the world into existence at the beginning of 'creation.'

invulnerability against the action of cosmic forces, and freedom from disease, decay and death, if death be certain somewhere and at some time and all things are thrown into the melting pot of dissolution in a 'pralaya,' to begin again a new process with no necessary connection or continuity with the world process that was past—a view similar to the modern astronomical theories of world-formations and world-dissolutions. We, for our part, believe that man is evolving on earth to be a *real immortal* at some future date when death shall ultimately be conquered, and the present 'ideal' of heaven become the 'fact' of the earth hereafter-to-be. In the light of the ideal expounded in the 29th verse of the previous chapter, the elaboration in this chapter on death, from verse 5 on, seems to be out of place. There should be no problem of a 'Prayanakala'; its mention here is abrupt and does not accord with the spirit of the other ideas mentioned in the context. To speak of the immortality of an '*abstract self*' (as we have previously noted) would be as pointless as to say that 'Life is not death' !

5. He who departs from the body at the time of death thinking on Me only, certainly reaches My state (or enters My being); there is no doubt of that.

And, generalising the idea :

6. Whosoever leaves the body at the end <sup>of</sup> thinking on any object (or being), that he attains, being in conformity with its nature.

Probably the 'ghosts' that are said to haunt a place do so because of such thoughts of theirs when dying !

7. Hence thinking on Me alone at all times, fight.  
With manas and buddhi anchored in Me, you shall, without doubt, reach Me.
8. With the mind trained by practice into harmony, and never wandering, one reaches the Supreme Divine Purusha, constantly meditating on Him.
9. One who ever thinks on Him, the Omniscient, the Ancient, the Ruler, more minute than the atom, the Support of all, of Form unimaginable, of the lustre of the Sun and who is beyond darkness ;

These are all Upanishadic expressions applied to Brahman. If the Supreme Purusha be of form unimaginable, how can He be pictured as described in the XIth chapter ? The descriptions given in the Upanishads of Brahman are to be taken only in the 'intensive' sense for purposes of meditation and contemplation, and not as literal characterisations of the One Reality as though it were a form in space.

10. At the time of death, with the mind steadied, in devotion fixed, and by the power of yoga establishing one's Prana (or breath) completely betwixt the eyebrows, one goes to this Supreme Purusha Divine.

This indicates the 'dying at will' of the yogi and has no reference to the ordinary man.

11. That which the Veda-knowers speak of as the Eternal, that which the self-controlled devoid of desires enter, that desiring which Brahma-charya is vowed, that state I shall you in brief.

The Brahma-charya referred to here may be the vow of physiological celibacy, according to the traditional views, though in our opinion it has no essential relation, nay is positively irrelevant, to Brahma-knowledge. We go further and assert that the knowledge which is so absolutely essential to realise how the Supreme Principle of Life works can never be had by the avowed celibate or the sanyasi, but can be had only by the grihasta. For, this knowledge can come only from *experience* of the creative process by which a jiva-to-be-born first enters the male parent and forms the seed which next getting deposited in the mother parent evolves the embryonic body, and then enters into the system of the new-born child at its first breathing. Without this knowledge, to say that Brahman is known would be idle. Brahman cannot be known by mere repetitions of the Upanishadic mahavakyas or simple philosophical discriminations, but only by *living experience*.

12—13. All the gates of the body (the senses by which one's attention goes out) controlled, with the manas steadied in the heart (the Anahata Chakra of the yogins), keeping one's life-breath at the top of the head (the Brahma-randhra), and fixed in Yoga-dharana (concentration); pronouncing (internally) the sacred syllable Aum that is Brahman, and thinking on Me\*, one who leaves the body and departs goes along the Supreme Path. (Cf. 5—7).

\* As the Guru, apparently, as otherwise there is no room for any concrete thought on Sri Krishna as an 'object' of meditation.

These verses might represent a school of thought or Vidya giving directions as to how a yogi should depart this life, which the author wanted to incorporate in the Gita. These directions remind us of Kalidasa's verse about the progeny of Raghu, who left the body at death-time by 'yoga.' The true sage is supposed to die by means of yoga (at his will), consciously by a process of body-prana control, and not like any other animal by natural causes and in a state of unconsciousness. The description in these verses is evidently given in answer to Arjuna's question as to how one should think on the Lord at the time of death in order to reach Him.

14. To him who constantly meditates on Me and not on any other (god) and who is a self-harmonised yogi, I am easy of reach.

15. Having reached Me, these great souls return not to re-births which are full of pain and non-eternal. They gain the supreme perfection.

Apparently this our world is assumed to be one whose lot is unmitigated pain and misery for all time with no prospect of salvation—as though it was specially created for our suffering. An excellent certificate indeed to its Maker from the children of the Earth !

16. The worlds from that of Brahma (the Creator) downwards come and go. But one who reaches Me shall not have to be re-born.

17. They who know say that a Day of Brahma (the Creator) is made up of a thousand yugas (ages); and a Night also is a thousand ages long. Thus they know Day and Night.

These Days and Nights are the traditional periods of 'activity' and 'rest' of the 'cycles-theory' of the world-process.

18. From the Avyakta (the latent condition of cosmic Prakriti) all the Vyaktas (manifest forms) issue forth at the Dawn of Day. When the Night comes they merge back into the self-same Avyakta.

These 'discontinuous' appearances and disappearances of worlds have also 'correspondences' in the 'micro-cosmic' organic forms, as, for example, in waking and sleeping and other organic activities such as breathing, the beating of the heart, etc.

19. This mass of beings issuing repeatedly at every Dawn gets dissolved at the coming of the Night, as though impelled by a necessity.

This is taken as an eternal (beginningless and endless) fact of Nature. Hence as a way out of this whirlpool it is said,

20. Therefore there truly exists, beyond this latent state of Avyakta (Prakriti's), another Avyakta, Eternal, which in the dissolution (as in a melting pot) of all beings, is not (Itself) destroyed.\*

But there will be a metaphysical impasse if such an absolute dualism be postulated at the Origin. We are, therefore, bound to assume that the Brahmic Avyakta while transcending the Prakritic Avyakta yet includes

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\* The Upanishadic Brahman as distinguished from Prakriti is also called Avyakta.

it in Its nature as the higher synthesis, as at once the 'subject' and the 'object' of Reality. The Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras support this view of 'Brahman' as the One Origin of both the subjective and the objective worlds.

21. That Supreme Goal is also known (to the wise) as the Unmanifest (Avyakta), the Eternal, reaching which there is no return. That is My Supreme Abode.
22. He, the Supreme Purusha, is accessible by undivided devotion. In Him all beings dwell and by Him all this is pervaded.

He is the Deity or the God-head that is both transcendent and immanent, and for purposes of Bhakti may be regarded as God, as here indicated. He must be conceived of as above the Trinity of popular theology and remains metaphysically as the nameless One.

Next we have a description of the traditional views about the two paths, the Devayana and the Pitriyana, of the Vedas and the Upanishads,—which has also to find a place in the Gita symposium ! These two 'paths' may be only allegorical in significance.

23. That time of departure which if the yogi (not the ordinary person) takes, he returns not (to re-birth) and also that time which if he takes, he does return, I tell you.
24. Fire, light, day-time, the bright fortnight and the six months of the Northern path (of the Sun), these mark the departure of the knowers of Brahman who go to Brahman.

They are said to pierce the disc of the Sun and reach Brahma-loka !

25. Smoke, night, the dark fortnight and the six months of the Southern course of the Sun, these mark the departure of the yogi (not yet perfected) who reaches the light of the Moon (the pitri-loka or the lunar world) and returns (to re-birth).

The Pitrīs are either the 'ancestral gods' who allocate births to the incarnating jivas and reside in Chandra-loka, or are our dead ancestors themselves who are supposed to reach the 'world of the Moon' and remain there till the time of their re-birth.

26. Light and Darkness, these are taken as the two eternal paths of the world. By one he goes who returns not; by the other he who returns.

27. Knowing these two ways, the yogi does not get confused. Therefore at all times be united in yoga.

The reason, as already noted, is that the *yogi* can choose his time of departure,—as for instance in the case of Bhishma.

28. Whatever merit is found in the Vedas, sacrifices, austerities and gifts, that the yogi surpasses by learning what has here been declared and goes to the Supreme and the Primary abode (of the Great Purusha).

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ROYAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE ROYAL MYSTERY

The Lord continues :

1. To you who are free from jealousy I now declare this, the greatest secret (of) knowledge that unifies, along with the knowledge that discriminates, understanding which you shall be freed from evil.
2. This is the kingly wisdom and kingly secret which is the supreme purifier ; it is what can be directly understood (that is, without any mediation), righteous, easy to act on and imperishable.
3. Those who are without faith in this Dharma (law of righteousness) do not reach Me but return to the path of mortal life-cycles.
4. By Me who am of unmanifest character all this world is permeated. All beings are rooted in Me, but not I in them.
5. Yet, beings are not (directly) based in Me. Behold My sovereign Yoga ! The support of all beings but not rooted in them, I am the *Idea* of the Universe.

The apparent contradiction between the statements in 4 and 5 regarding the 'relation' between 'beings' and the Lord, is to be explained on the view that

'beings' are really 'Prakriti's' handiwork made under the influence of the 'contemplation' or 'idea' of the Lord (in whom *esse* is *percipi*) as the superintending Deity. Hence He is known also as the eternal 'sakshi' (witness) of the world. Thus it is said :

6. As the mighty air penetrating into everything is ever established in the ether-space (akasa), so also all beings are to be understood as established in Me.

This simile better represents Prakriti in its Avyakta aspect than Iswara whose influence is only 'ideal' !

7. All beings re-enter My Prakriti, (the unmanifest, Avyakta, of Chap. VIII. 18—20) at the (time of) dissolution of a Kalpa. At the beginning of a (new) Kalpa I set Them out.

These alternating commencements and dissolutions of the universes (kalpas) are like the Days and Nights of Brahma, and are the workings of Prakriti by the operation of the 'laws of causation.' Iswara by His superintending and guiding 'Idea' which stands as a 'teleological principle' over the 'material' operations of Prakriti without itself being any 'material' part of the cosmos, remains unaffected by these processes.

8. Resting on My Prakriti, I send forth all these beings every time (i.e., Myself remaining within, undrawn), as though (they are sent out) by the force of Prakriti (i.e., due to Karma) to appear manifest as if helplessly.

9. These activities (which are really of Prakriti's) do not bind Me who am seated as one un-

affected within them, and without any attachment (to results).

This illustrates the attitude of a perfect Karma Yogi ; Iswara Himself being the 'ideal' of activity without any attachment in the cosmos.

10. Under My supervision Prakriti brings forth the moving and the unmoving (beings); by virtue of this (the Lord's supervision) the world-process goes on.

That is, the world-process comes to a stand-still in a laya-condition, if the Lord's supervision is withdrawn.

11. Fools (Duryodhana and others like him) disregard Me in My human embodiedness, being unaware of My supreme nature as the Lord of beings;

12. Given to empty hopes, vain actions and with a confused intelligence, they are senseless, being addicted to the deluding prakriti of the rakshasic (cruel) and asuric (egoistic) qualities (that is, the Rajasic and the Tamasic modes of Prakriti).

13. But the great-souled (of men), partaking of My divine nature, adore Me with undivided mind, knowing Me as the imperishable Origin of beings.

14. They ever praise Me and strive with steadfast determination (for self-harmonisation). They worship Me, ever harmonised, and prostrate before Me in devotion.

15. There are also others who worship Me by the yajna of knowledge (single-minded endeav-

vour to know), as the One and the many, the All-seeing.

This seems to refer to the yogi's effort to gain both an 'intensive' and 'extensive' knowledge of Brahman as the one fundamental Reality—as the ideal knowledge.

16. I am the (sacrificial) rite and the act of sacrifice. I am the offering to the sacred fire as well as the sacred herb. I am the sacred hymn (mantra) and the clarified butter. I am the sacred fire and the burnt offering.

This is similar to the idea in IV. 24, indicative of the allegorical interpretation of the items of a sacrifice, as all Brahman, probably intended to exalt the cult of sacrifices. It bears no relation in the context to the preceding or the succeeding verse.

17. I am the Father of the Universe, the Mother, the Support and the Grandsire; I am what should be known, the Pure, the (mystic) Aum and the (three Vedas) Rik, Sama and Yajus.

Only three of the Vedas are recognised as primary, Atharva, the fourth, being taken as a later compilation and containing many passages from the other three.

18. I am the Way (or the Goal), the consort, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the friend, the origin, the dissolution, the foundation (or place), the home and the seed imperishable.

19. I heat (the world) and also give and withhold the rain. I am deathlessness as well as death; being and non-being am I.

20. The learned in the three Vedas, the drinkers of 'Soma' (sacrificial juice) who are purified of their sins, having performed sacrifices, desire the way to heaven ; they, ascending the pure world of the Ruler of the gods, enjoy there (in heaven) the heavenly joys.
21. Having enjoyed (the pleasures) of the vast heavenly regions, their merit (getting) exhausted, they come back (are reborn) into this world of death. Following the laws of the three Vedas, they obtain what comes and goes (that is, the transitory) desiring (only) desirable objects.
22. (But) as for those who adore Me alone, thinking of none other, who are ever harmonised, I look to their welfare.
23. Even those devotees who worship other gods with faith, they also worship Me (indirectly), though in a manner contrary to the ancient rules.
24. I am verily the enjoyer of all forms of sacrifice (worship) and their Lord. But they (those referred to in the previous verse) know Me not in essence and hence fall (to re-births).
25. Those who are devoted to the (minor) gods go to them. Those who worship the 'pitris' go to them. The worshippers of the elemental spirits go to the elemental spirits. But My worshippers come unto Me.
26. He who offers with devotion to Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, even that

a token of devotion from the individual who strives (to reach Me).

27. Whatever you do, or eat, or sacrifice or give as a gift, whatever you do as austerity (tapas), do that as an offering to Me.
28. You will be freed from the bondage of Karma thereby, whether that Karma be good or bad in results. Harmonised in the Self by the yoga of renunciation, you will be freed and reach Me.
29. I am impartial to all beings. I neither hate or favour any. Those who worship Me with devotion dwell in Me and I in them.
30. Even if the most sinful should worship Me and none else, he should be considered virtuous since his resolve is right.
31. Speedily he becomes righteous-minded and attains permanent peace. Know with certainty that none of My devotees shall ever be lost.
32. Those who take refuge in Me, though born of sin, though they be women, Vaisyas or even Sudras, they also go along the highest path.

This is the catholicity of the Gita teaching which appeals to the whole of humanity irrespective of any distinctions of caste, creed or sex, or even race. The ancient Hindu rules prohibit Veda study and Vedantic life to all except Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The Gita over-rules these distinctions. (Cf. IV. 11). The 'God' of the Gita and the way to Him are no monopoly of any

individual or sect. May we say that the Gita, like Buddhism, is a revolt against Vedic orthodoxy and ritualism ?

33. How much more easily then should holy Brahmins and devoted kingly sages (who are the classes privileged to learn the sacred doctrines) ? Having got into this transient world of misery, worship Me (to get out of it).

That existence here is misery is again asserted (dogmatically) in this verse. Such is the general tenor of the Hindu and the Buddhist attitude to life here on earth. In a sense all religions which seek another world of happiness, a heaven after death, look on existence here as something that must be escaped from. Apparently they assume that the earth and our sojourn thereon are due to some error somewhere at the beginning of things, and that this state of things is irremediable except probably by a dissolution. Those who do not wish to throw the blame on the Creator invent various explanations as to why life here is misery or even why it should be what it is. We get involved in metaphysical dilemmas so long as we postulate that there is another place beyond the earth where we should go to find peace and happiness after death and which is also taken as representing our original home. If there were such a place we could as well have remained there from the beginning and this world need not have come into being ! To condemn this world as one of death and misery is to condemn the Origin which brought this into existence. To avoid this awkward conclusion we must take a different view and consider that death and misery are only passing phases ; and like an unfinished

work of art, the present nature of our existence represents but imperfectly what it is ultimately destined to be. There is no need to duplicate existence and speak of different worlds such as heavens and hells along with the earth. We have already referred elsewhere to the hope that this earth itself might become in 'fact' the heaven of which we have all along been accustomed to speak. The earth should be looked upon as destined to be the abode of a new race of immortal beings at the allotted time. Buddhistic, Vedantic, Sankhyan and other other-worldly views of religions will ultimately disappear when the new order is established—the new Kalpa of Eternity. We should not forget that 'existence' can be *one only*; and it is in such existence (which should also be continuous) that our evolution should find its consummation. We should not assume that the original plan behind evolution has already worked out its end; we are only mid-way, as it were, at the point wherefrom a new impulse that will take it to its destined goal begins to work. When that goal is achieved none of the defects of the earth-life, that now seem to be inescapable, will remain.

As His final counsel the Lord says :

34. Let your mind be fixed on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice unto Me, prostrate in worship before Me. You will certainly reach Me, harmonised in the Self and looking on Me as the Supreme Goal.

Thus ends this Royal secret and Royal science (about the path to reach the Supreme, without distinctions of caste, sex, etc.). This verse prepares us for the yoga of Bhakti described in Chap. XII.

## CHAPTER X

### THE VIBHUTIS OF THE LORD

Herein we find further amplification and illustration of the Lord's glory and excellence, i.e., His 'Vibhuti.'

1. Hear Me again, My supreme word which I declare desiring your welfare, because you are well beloved of Me.
2. The host of the (minor) gods or the Great Rishis know not My power of expansion (into the manifest world); for I am the First (or Origin) of the gods and also of the Rishis.

It means that the Lord can only be revealed by Himself.

3. He who understands Me as the unborn, Unoriginated (by another) and as the Great Lord of the World and who, amidst mortals, is undeluded, is freed from all sin.
- 4—5. Wisdom, knowledge, non-delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, peace, pleasure, pain, being and non-being, fear and fearlessness; harmlessness, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame and ill-fame, are the various qualities of beings, springing forth from Me.

6. The seven Maha (Great) Rishis, the ancients Four\* and also the Manus are mind-born and of My nature, out of whom this world of beings (was born).
7. One who understands in essence the sovereignty and yoga of Mine becomes harmonised by unfaltering yoga (Bhakti) without any doubt.
8. I am the Origin of all and in Me all moves. The wise understanding Me thus adore Me whole-heartedly.
9. With their minds fixed on Me, their life in Me rooted, enlightening one another by discourses about Me, (conversing about Me) they are content and happy.

This indicates the mode of life of a 'Bhakta.'

10. On them, ever harmonious and adoring Me with devotion, I bestow Buddhi yoga, (Cf. Ch. II) by which they reach Me.

This shows the importance of Buddhi yoga as the one means of life by 'Viveka' by which one frees oneself from karmic bondage.

11. Out of compassion for them, I destroy the darkness of their ignorance by the light of wisdom, establishing Myself in their nature.

Arjuna here says :

- 12—13. Supreme Brahman, supreme Abode and the supremely Pure are You. As the Eternal

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\* Probably Kumaras, since they are not mentioned elsewhere in the list.

Purusha Divine, the First of Gods, Unborn and Supreme, all the Rishis acclaim You ; so also do the divine Rishi Narada, so Asita, Devala and Vyasa. You Yourself declare so to me now.

14. All this I believe true that You have declared to Me. Your manifest nature neither the gods nor the demons comprehend.
15. By Yourself You know Yourself, Source of beings, Lord of beings, God of gods, Ruler of the world.
16. Be pleased to tell Me without reserve the divine glories of Your Self by which pervading all these worlds, You remain (in them, Yourself untainted).
17. How am I to comprehend You, O Yigin, ever meditating on You ? In what various aspects are You to be meditated upon by me ?
18. Let me be again told by You in detail about Your yoga and excellences. There is no satiety to me in listening to Your nectar-like discourse.

This is the ecstatic response of Arjuna to the teaching of the Lord in the preceding discourses. It prepares him for the 'phenomenal appearance'—which he wished to 'see'—of the excellences of the Lord in His aspect of pervading the whole world, and which is the central theme of the next chapter.

'The Lord says :

19. Right glad am I to declare to you My divine

glories, only the important ones, as otherwise there would be no end to their details.

20. I am the Self (*cf.* the concept of Kshetrajna in Chap. XIII) established in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end (or Goal) of all beings.

This is the most primary of the Lord's Vibhutis, showing that He claimed to be at-one with the God-head, the God of all gods.

Of the details, the chief ones are given below :

21. Of the Adityas (the progeny of Aditi, the mother of gods) I am Vishnu; of radiant lights the Sun; of Maruts Marichi and of the asterisms the Moon.

The 'Moon' (male) is said to be the Lord or 'husband' of the asterisms. Here 'nakshatra' does not mean 'star,' but one of the 27 lunar constellations.

22. Of the Vedas (I am) the Sama Veda, Vasava (Indra) of the gods, 'manas' of the senses (as antah-karana) and of productions 'chetana' (life-consciousness).
23. Sankara of the Rudras (a class of Vedic deities), Kubera (Lord of wealth) of the Yakshas and the Rakshasas, Pavaka of the Vasus, and Meru of the mountain-tops;
24. Know Me as Brihaspati, the chief of the sacrificial priests, Skanda among the commanders, and the ocean among the waters;
25. Of the Maharsis I am Bhrigu, of words the One syllable (Aum), of sacrifices (yajnas).

the japa-yajna (muttering of sacred words),  
and of immovable things the Himalayas;

26. Asvattha (the sacred fig-tree) among the trees,  
Narada of the Divine Rishis, Chitraradha of  
the Gandharvas, and Kapila-muni of the  
Siddhas;
27. Know Me as Uchchaisravas (Indra's horse)  
born of the ocean of nectar, among horses,  
and Airavata (Indra's elephant) among lordly  
elephants, and of men the king;
28. Of weapons I am the thunderbolt (Indra's  
weapon) and of cows Kamadhuk (Vasishta's  
cow); of progenitors I am Kandarpa (the  
god of Love and Vishnu's son) and Vasuki of  
serpents.
29. Ananta of the Nagas, Varuna of sea-dwellers,  
Aryaman of the Pitrис, and Yama of controllers  
(of justice and law);
30. I am Prahlada of the Daitya race, of reckoners;  
I am Time, of the beasts their lord, the lion,  
and Vainateya (the divine eagle, the vehicle  
of Vishnu) of the birds;
31. Of Purifiers I am the wind, Rama of the  
archers, Makara of the sea-monsters, and of  
streams the Ganges;
32. Of creations I am the beginning and the ending  
and also the middle; of all knowledge, the  
knowledge of the Self and the speech of  
orators;

33. A of the letters, the dvandva among the samasas (compounds of words); I am the infinite Time and the support of all, facing everywhere;
34. I am the all-devouring death and the origin of all things yet to be; fame, prosperity, speech among feminine (qualities) as also memory, intelligence, fortitude and forgiveness;
35. The great Saman of the Sama Hymns and Gayatri of the poetic metres; of the months the Margasirsha and of the seasons the flowery (season);
36. The game of the gambler and the splendour of those who possess splendour; victory, determination and the vigour of the vigorous am I;
37. I am the son of Vasudeva of the Vrishni clan and Arjuna of the Pandavas; Vyasa I am of the Munis and Usanas of the poets;
38. The rod of justice and the policy of those who wish to conquer; the silence of those who keep secrets and the knowledge of the knowers;
39. Whatever is the seed of all beings, that am I; there is nought moving or unmoving that can exist without Me;
40. There can be no end to My divine excellences.\* What has been given here is only by way of illustration.

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\* All the above Vibhutis are considered as aspects of the Lord's divine Prakriti.

41. Whatever is glorious, powerful, beautiful or good, know that as having originated in Me, from a ray of Myself (as the Lord of Daivi Prakriti).

This means that all true values are positive qualities that proceed from the Lord. They are the 'virtues' of things. What we have as 'evil' or 'vice' is to be understood as only indicative of a *lack of virtue*, as *negative* and not positive, or as *virtues in the making*. The real is the 'positive'; and everything in the world is tending to be positive in the course of its evolution.

42. But of what use is knowledge of these details to you ? Having occupied this whole universe with one ray (or fragment) of Myself I ever am.

The remark here of the Lord Himself shows that this chapter had no bearing on Arjuna's problem or on the main Gita discourses. It is apparently intended by the author to prepare Arjuna's mind for the 'scene' of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FORM UNIVERSAL

This chapter in the Gita is made much of by certain Vaishnava enthusiasts as glorifying their favorite Deity; and even grotesque pictures *literally* representing the 'visvarupa-darsana' are painted on temple walls and reproduced in certain Gita publications! However, we should judge for ourselves without any bias whether the form 'visvarupa' attributed to Sri Krishna by the poet does justice in any way to the teaching that the Gita purports to give us as an Upanishad. The term Visvarupa is itself a self-contradiction philosophically considered. And the form that is revealed is not either pleasing or edifying in any theological sense so as to be appropriately ascribed to what we conceive of as the Deity. How can the Universal Deity as *Spirit* that is intensively all-pervading be pictured as a *form in space*? Both Arjuna's request and the Lord's display appear quite abrupt and inconsistent, considering the doctrines earlier taught in the Gita itself, about Brahman as the One Great Spirit. Sri Krishna had nowhere mentioned that He was the Supreme One whose form could be *seen*, but had only described Himself as the One Self residing in all beings and expressing Himself by various *attributes* (*vibhutis*) originating from Him. Arjuna's question, therefore, appears to be based on an entire misunderstanding of the spirit of Sri Krishna's exposition of the Self. Arjuna asks:

1—4. The explanation You have given, out of compassion for me, about the supreme secrets concerning the Self, has cleared my confusion. The origin and destiny of beings I have heard recounted in detail, as well as Your imperishable glory. Even as You described Your Self, in that Form of Lordship I wish to have a 'sight' of You. If You think that it can be seen by me, then show me Your Imperishable Self.

The request of Arjuna's in 3 and 4 takes our breath away by its utter lack of philosophic appreciation of what the Self is described to be in the Gita. We wonder how this chapter could have found a place in this work. Can it be that it is an interpolation introduced by one whose knowledge of the Upanishadic Atman was entirely wrong? Chapter XIII of the Gita itself (representing the essence of the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman-Atman) clearly shows the impossibility of 'picturing' the Self as a *form*. If that chapter is to be accepted, this chapter deserves to be deleted. The all-embracing characteristics of Brahman as explained in Chapter XIII are *intensive*, and not *extensive* or such as to be represented by any form, as this chapter attempts to represent them. The external picture of the world of forms exhibits only discontinuity. The continuity and unity of the Universe (as Brahman) is realised as *direct* knowledge by the soul and cannot be seen like a picture. How far removed is such direct and intensive knowledge of the Self from the picture of Visvarupa described here, any one with a philosophic turn of mind can easily understand. There can be no room for any 'otherness' in the experience of *direct* perception.

From the description given in this chapter how can we say that Arjuna saw the Lord's Self ? This 'Visvarupa' exhibition may at best have been a variety of 'thought-form' produced in Arjuna's mind or a sort of hypnotic (subjective) effect on him and nothing more. Arjuna stands 'outside' the picture, as an *external* observer, and is not incorporated into the vision by any consciousness of *at-one-ment* with the Lord. When the Lord addresses Arjuna in the scene, it is not intelligible wherefrom and how He could speak or Arjuna hear. The consciousness of unity with the Supreme Self that one may expect as the result of a Divine Revelation will be contrary to the description of the Visvarupa here. How can this vision be described as something that even the gods covet ? We doubt the genuineness of this chapter—however the traditional commentators might have viewed it. To us, this Visvarupa stands only as a metaphysical monstrosity.

The Lord says :

5. Behold My Forms divine which are hundred-fold and thousand-fold, of various kinds, colours and shapes.
6. Behold the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, the Asvin-twins and the Maruts. These many marvels were never seen before.
7. Behold the whole world, moving and unmoving, shown in My body as one (collected whole), and also whatsoever you desire to see.
7. Since however you cannot see Me with your normal eyes, I bestow on you divine sight. See the *yoga* of My Lordliness.

Here the poet tries to give the description of Visvārupa as seen by a third party, Sanjaya who was given clairvoyant powers by Vyasa, the reputed author of the Mahabharata and the Gita. The blind king also comes thus to know of it indirectly. But the Lord states, according to the poet, that Arjuna alone could see it. How did Sanjaya then manage to peep in ? Was the Lord aware of this espionage ? The poet, further, does not seem to have any correct understanding of the *varieties* and *limitations* of clairvoyant powers. The vision of Sanjaya, bestowed on him by Vyasa, for example, must have been different from that of Arjuna, and *limited* to the *physical* plane, enabling him merely to describe what happened on the battlefield ; and he could have seen only what the assembled warriors could witness in the place and not what Arjuna was experiencing subjectively. In other words, Sanjaya could not have *seen* the Visvarupa as an *objective* phenomenon without the rest on the battlefield also seeing it simultaneously ! We have therefore to conclude that Sanjaya's description of the appearance is only the 'fancy' of the poet, a mere poetic fiction. Otherwise, how could the Lord assert that the vision was vouchsafed to Arjuna alone ?

It is also remarkable that, throughout the recital, the blind king does not utter a single syllable expressive of reverence or rapturous devotion such as an intimate description of the God-head might be expected to inspire. If the slightest impression had been made on his mind by Sanjaya's narration, he might have put a stop to the battle even at that stage, when it was known that the issue was a foregone conclusion ! But nothing of the kind occurred. The blind king was adamant.

Sanjaya says :

9. Having so said, the Great Yogesvara Hari showed to Partha His Supreme Lordly form,
10. (endowed) with many faces and eyes, many wondrous features, many divine ornaments and with many divine weapons upraised,
11. With divine garlands and clothes, and anointed with divine unguents, the God marvellous every way, infinite and with faces turned everywhere ;
12. His radiance was as though a thousand suns rose up in the sky simultaneously ; such was the splendour of the Great One.
13. There Arjuna beheld as at one place the whole world in its manifoldness, in the body of the Lord of all the gods.
14. Then Arjuna, his hair standing on end in wonder, bowed down his head to the Lord, and with folded hands (in obeisance) said,

One wonders if ever any God-form could have been pictured like this ! It appears almost like a grotesque materialisation, caricaturing the concept of Brahman's ubiquity which the Upanishads express in symbolic language. Why should 'God' be 'ornamented' as described here ? Why weapons for Him ?

Arjuna says :

15. I see all the gods in Your body, O God, as well as all beings with their distinct marks,— Brahma on His lotus seat, Isa and all the Rishis and the divine serpents.

This, of course, assumes that it is Vishnu who contains in Himself all these beings. Hence He is not mentioned separately. This represents the Vaishnava bias of the author, as verse 17 further indicates.

16. I see You with many arms, bellies, mouths, eyes and Yourself existing everywhere, infinite in forms, with no ending or middle or beginning. You are the Lord of all and infinite in form ;
17. You shine with crown, mace, discus, a blazing mass radiating on all sides and dazzling the sight from all sides, incomparable in lustre, bright as the sun and fire.
18. You are the Imperishable, the Supreme One of all knowledge, the stay and support of all this world ; You are the Unexhausted and the protector of the eternal Dharma, the Primal Purusha ; such is my conviction.
19. I see You as the One without beginning, middle or end, Infinite in power, infinite-armed, with the Sun and the Moon as eyes, shining with the face of dazzling fire, heating the world with Your radiance ;
20. By You alone the whole earth, the heavens and the space between, in all directions are filled. Seeing Your wondrous and awe-inspiring form, the three worlds seem to be oppressed ;

Are the denizens of the three worlds also to be supposed to have seen this form ? Who sees whom, how and wherefrom ? The description seems to be a too literal picturisation of the highly symbolic Upanishadic conception of Brahman as the All.

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21. The celestial hosts enter into Your form ; some in consternation praise You with folded hands ; the Maharshis and the Siddhas, in bands, saying 'svasti' (hail) sing Your praises in abundance.

22. Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, the Visvedevas, the Asvins, Maruts, Ushmapas (?), Gandharvas, Yakshas, Siddhas, Asuras, in hosts, look on You in wonder.

From this point the picture begins to develop into one of horror, unrolling like a 'movie' in an unimaginable complication of metaphysical repulsiveness !

23. Looking at Your mighty form with many faces and eyes and a great many arms, thighs and feet, many-bellied and with many fierce teeth, the worlds are seized with fear, as well as myself !

Next Arjuna begins to shake with fear at the sight 'divine,' that he so much longed to see in the hope of attaining 'spiritual' ecstasy ! It is not strange that he should request later on that the Lord should resume His natural normal appearance.

24. Your multi-colored radiance touches the sky. Your mouth opens wide, Your wide eyes shine and sparkle. Seeing You thus I quake. Courage and calmness have left me.

25. Your sharp teeth and Your mouths with their flames of destruction, seen by me, make me lose the sense of direction. Have mercy, Lord of the worlds, be appeased.

26. The sons of Dhritarashtra and their princely followers, with Bhishma, Karna, Drona and even the warriors of our own armies,
27. Rush into Your gaping mouths sharp-toothed and awe-inspiring ; some are caught between Your teeth and have their heads crushed and ground ;
28. As the rushing waters of rivers hurry oceanwards, so also these men, heroes and kings, are seen rushing in haste into Your fiery mouths ;
29. As moths speed headlong into a flaming fire for their own destruction, so also these men rush in haste to be destroyed in Your mouths ;
30. You seem to devour all by Your mouths, licking up by fiery tongues these men on every side. By Your blaze the whole world is filled up ; by Your scorching radiance the universe seems to burn ;
31. Great Lord, how terrible is Your form ! Be appeased. Salutation to You. Let me see again Your original form. This manifestation of Yours bewilders me.

This is nice testimony, indeed, from Arjuna himself, to the 'divine' vision that he wanted to have and was shown by the Lord !

Then the Lord begins to speak,

32. I am Time, the Great Destroyer of worlds. I am come to destroy the world of men. All

these warriors ranged to fight are fated to die. None escapes except yourself !

However, Arjuna was not the only one who survived ! Then the order from which no psychological escape is possible is given to Arjuna by the Lord,

33. Arise and win fame. Having conquered your enemies enjoy the realm filled with prosperity. All these are killed by Me. Be thou only the instrument of action.

Human beings are only to work out the sankalpa or idea of God ; they are not real actors but instruments in His hands. (This is also the gist of the teaching in Ch. II).

34. Drona and Bhishma (who sided with Duryodhana, apparently against the Lord's wish), Jayadratha, Karna and other warriors have already been slain by Me. Conquer them without fear ; fight. You will vanquish them, your rivals, in the field.

How 'fairly' these were vanquished in the battle is well known to the readers of the Mahabharata !

Sanjaya says (to the blind king),

35. Arjuna, having heard the Lord's speech, with his hands folded (in salutation), shaking with fear and prostrating himself, said to the Lord in a stammering voice,

\*36. Lord of the senses, rightly doth the universe

\* Verses 36 to 40 and 43 and 44 bring back to the author his undergraduate days at Mrs. A. V. N. College, Vizagapatam, when the late P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was the Principal, made the College-work begin with a recitation of these 7 verses by some selected student each day.

Rejoice in Thy renown and sing Thee hymns of  
praise ;  
The rakshasas, afraid, in all directions fly.  
While all the Siddha-hosts salute and bow to  
Thee.

37. How should they not adore Thee, O Great Soul,  
Thou greater ev'n than Brahma, First of causes !  
Infinite, Lord of gods, the Home of all the  
worlds,  
Imperishable, Sat, Asat, and That beyond.
38. The First of gods, Purusha Thou, the Primal  
One,  
Abode Supreme of This, the whole and all,  
The Knower, the Knowable, the Place as well  
Beyond.  
The whole is spread in Thee, Thou infinite in  
form.
39. Vayu, Yama, Agni and Varuna art Thou,  
The Moon, Prajapati, the Great Grandsire as  
well.  
To Thee I make obeisances, over and over ;  
Thousands of salutations I do make again.
40. I bow to Thee in front and ev'n behind as well,  
On every side to Thee, the All, I bow again.  
Of valour infinite and pow'r unmeasured Thou,  
All is by Thee possessed and hence art Thou,  
the All.
41. If in my early ignorance I addressed You in  
fondness and familiarity as friend and called

You importunately Krishna, Yadava, friend,  
not knowing Your divinity,

42. If in a jesting mood I acted irreverently towards You in play, while resting, seated or eating, when You were alone or in company, forgive me the carelessness, O incomparable and inscrutable One.
43. Father art Thou of worlds, of that which moves and stands ;  
Worthy of reverence, the Higher Guru Thou ;  
Like unto Thee is none ; how can a greater be,  
In glory Thou unequalled in the lokas three ?
44. Therefore I fall prostrate, to Thee my body bow'd.  
Be pleased to bless, I pray, Thou Lord adorable;  
As doth the father with the son, as friend with friend,  
The lover his beloved, bear ev'n with Me, O God.
45. What was never seen before, is now seen by me and my heart is full of joy. Yet my mind quakes with fear. Be merciful and show Yourself again (in the normal form) as of old, O God of gods, the Seat of all the worlds.
46. I want to see You again with Your usual emblems of crown, mace, and discus as before. Be You pleased to appear in Your four-armed form.\*

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\* How can there be 'four' arms in the normal human form ?  
Are they symbolic ?

The Lord says,

47. By My grace you have seen this supreme form revealed by the yoga of the Self, the form radiant, omnipresent, infinite, primary, which none but yourself has ever seen.
48. It is not by the Vedas, yajnas, adhyayanas, gifts or severe austerities that this form of Mine could be seen in the world of men ; you alone (of men) have seen it.
49. Be not troubled or confounded, having seen this My form terrible. Cast away fear and be at peace. See again My normal appearance.

Sanjaya says to Dhritarashtra,

50. The Lord having thus spoken to Arjuna withdrew His aweful appearance ; and appearing in His natural form released Arjuna from his terror.

The introduction of Sanjaya here, as also in the earlier portions, appears to be only a poetical device employed for the sake of narration.

Arjuna says,

51. Seeing again Your gentle form, my mind has now become normal again.

This confession of Arjuna's at the end of his vision should be sufficient to show us what value we should attach to this Visva-rupa-darsana incident, viewed whether as a panegyric of God-head or as a metaphysic of the Brahmic Self !

The Lord says,

52. This appearance of Mine is hard to see. You have seen it. The gods themselves ever long to have a glimpse of it.
53. I cannot be seen, as you have seen Me, by means of either the Vedas, or austerities, or alms or gifts.

This oblique reference to Vedas, etc., here and at 48 suggests that tilting at the Vedic cult and ritualism which the Gita (except in such parts as appear to be interpolations) cannot resist making whenever occasion offers !

54. By devotion to Me alone is it possible for one to see Me thus, and to know and see in essence and enter into (My nature).

Next we have the last verse of the chapter that leads to the topic of the next chapter.

55. He who acts in My name (or does actions: assigning the fruit to Me), who is ever attached to Me (to whom I am the Supreme goal), whose devotion is to Me, who is free from attachments, who has hate for none among all the beings, does reach (or attain) Me.

## CHAPTER XII

### BHAKTI YOGA

In this chapter we find an edifying exposition of the cult of Bhakti towards the God-head conceived in a concrete form,—though it repeats only the main teachings of the Second Chapter, on Buddhi yoga. Arjuna asks, being highly impressed by the last words of Sri Krishna, for a more detailed account of the nature of Devotion by which one can qualify oneself to enter into the bliss of unity with God. However, Sri Krishna is made (by the author in his bias for developing a theistic outlook) to draw a needless distinction between the worship (*upasana*) of the Unmanifest Brahman and that of a concrete manifest God. The Lord, in His answer, shows that devotion to a concrete conception of God is *more easy* for the concrete mind, but does not make any difference so far as the Goal is concerned. We may note, however, that the Unmanifest cannot be really said to be an *object* of any act of devotion.

Arjuna asks,

1. Of those devotees, ever harmonised in themselves, who worship You (as God) and those others who seek the Eternal and the Unmanifest (Brahman), who is the better versed in *yoga* ?

The Lord replies,

2. Those who with their minds centred in Me and ever harmonised, worship with supreme faith,

arc, I am convinced, men of the firmest resolution.

We may take it that the main purpose of the teaching in this part of the Gita is Bhakti of a concrete type directed to Sri Krishna as the object, understanding Him as the representation of God-head to whom our whole mind and all our activities are to be assigned, without any attachment to ourselves as agents, by maintaining the attitude described as Karma yoga. Hence the preference shown to Bhakti towards the concrete God-form in Sri Krishna. It must be remembered that throughout the Gita Sri Krishna was speaking of Himself as at-one with Brahman or God-head, and drew no distinction between Himself and the Unmanifest and Eternal One (as 'That' beyond which there is none VIII. 21, XV. 6). Yet this concept of Brahman has been purposely thrown (by the author) into the background here, because the teaching of the Gita is for men engaged in the world of actions and dealing with objective situations. To those who are not so situated, the Upasana of contemplative life directed to Brahman is equally open and possible. Hence,

3—4. They who adore the Indestructible, the Ineffable (or the Undeterminable), the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchangeable, the Immutable and the Eternal (all epithets of the Upanishadic Brahman, as Nirguna, unqualifiable Reality) who have their senses controlled, their minds regarding all as the same, and who wish for the welfare of all, these also reach Me.

The word 'also' in the end betrays the author's

theistic bias. This statement should be more appropriately reversed ; the correct order of preference would have been indicated if the Lord had said that those who worship Him would be able, through Him, to *also* reach the same Brahman, the Origin of all, which is describable only in negative terms. Sri Krishna should be considered as a 'substitute' (as Saguna) for Brahman, needed for those who require a concrete object for their Bhakti,—the result being ultimately the same.

Sri Krishna next gives the reason for His preference for Saguna upasana :

5. The difficulty of those whose minds are given to the Unmanifest is greater ; for, the path of the Unmanifest is hard for embodied beings to follow (that is, for the concrete-minded).

This remark, put into Sri Krishna's mouth, is rather strange. We have no reason to suppose that the Nirgunopasana, the way of the Unmanifest, is never intended for us mortals at all ; for, were that the case, it would not have been advocated or even mentioned in the Upanishads.

Any yoga endeavour is only for men in their embodied state and not at the disembodied level where we can be at best only in a 'subjective' condition. The yoga which a person follows here, on earth, should suit his psychology. 'Abstract' and 'concrete' are classifications, into two classes, of all individuals. One might, for example, say that mathematics is a difficult subject. But we should enquire to whom it is so. To the non-mathematically minded the subject is no doubt difficult ; but to the mathematical mind it is easy. The same

analogy holds in regard to Sagunopasana and Nirgunopasana. Concrete Bhakti will appeal to some, as abstract contemplation does to others. Hence the distinction is only one of personal preferences and has nothing to do with one being 'superior' to the other. Further, it must be noted that the ultimate end is to realise Brahman and not to remain satisfied with devotion to any concrete and limited representation, or a 'substitute.' The latter can at best be an intermediate stage and not the final goal of yoga. This chapter might as well have begun with a direct exposition of Bhakti (concrete worship) from verse 6, without making any invidious comparisons such as are suggested in 1 to 5. Each type of upasana has its own value to the individual concerned as a means and they must ultimately meet in the perfect man. Either would only represent the following of the line of least resistance for the individual to start with. After all, as Sri Krishna Himself has stated at IV. 33, 36—41, it is not Bhakti as such, but the ultimate Jnana (the saving knowledge of the Self) that it leads to by the grace of the Lord Himself towards whom Bhakti is directed, that is the real aim. Bhakti yoga is a *means*, just as the contemplation of the Unmanifest Brahman is; both ultimately meet in Self-knowledge where both the concrete and the abstract exist but as the two phases of the same fundamental Reality which the individual aims to realise in himself.

However, the Bhakti that is advocated in this chapter is not (and should not be identified with) the sort that is paraded in the streets with dance and song; it is the internal 'movement' of the subject towards the Lord in silence and quietude by a contemplation of God-head as concretised in a Being, so as to attain

the ecstasy of unity with the object of devotion ; this is known as Sagunopasana. It is the rapturous soul-to-soul union attained by the meeting of the devotee and his God in an at-one-ment. It is a variety of *yoga* not to be confused with Bhajanas, worship and other external paraphernalia. It is not connected with prayers, fasts, rituals or ceremonies, or with any form of congregational worship in churches or temples or in the market-place, but meditation in seclusion, silence and secrecy. (cf. Christ's teaching on prayer in Mathew VI. 5—7). 5—7).

The Lord next gives the characteristics of his Bhakta :

6. Those (the bhaktas) who are devoted to Me (as God), who dedicate in complete submission all their activities to Me, with their resolve (yoga) directed to none else, and who worship ever meditating on Me,
7. Them I quickly deliver from their mortal existence in this sea of samsara (the recurring cycles of birth and death), their minds being entirely consecrated to Me.
8. Fix your mind on Me ; and let your buddhi enter into Me. You will, without any doubt, ever dwell thereafter in Me.
9. If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me, then strive by determined practice to reach Me.
10. If you are not able to so practise, then do actions for My sake. Performing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection.

11. If you are not able even to do so, then take refuge in Me, well determined, and renounce the fruit of all actions, remaining self-controlled.
12. Better than practice is Jnana; better than Jnana is meditation; renouncing the fruit of action is better than meditation. After renunciation there is peace.

These successive steps seemingly given for purposes of indicating easier methods of Bhakti, and the comparisons in the 12th verse, do not enable us to form any clear idea of what the author intended by the sequences and the distinctions he drew. What the Jnana is, to which meditation and renunciation are said to be superior (whereas we understood the latter two as only means to Jnana from IV. 33—38; VII. 18, etc.) is also vague. It cannot be Sankhya Jnana, for Viveka or discrimination between the Self and Prakriti is the aim of all yoga discipline. The fact that at one place Jnana, at another Karma (yoga) and again at another renunciation and still elsewhere Bhakti should be exalted over the rest, does not conduce to the definiteness of the teaching; it is only indicative of bias or confusedness in the mind of the author himself. One should know the fundamental aim of the Gita Sastra—the knowledge of one's self as the Pure Self quite distinct from Prakriti and remaining unaffected by its changes, as explained in Chapter II—in order to determine the respective values of the various other 'ideals' mentioned as means. Though the means be many, the end is one.

From the next verse on to the end of the chapter we have a clearer exposition of 'Bhakti,' which in its

purity and emphasis on absolute dedication of oneself to God is not rivalled by any other religious teaching. Of course, the ideas have been already given under a different heading (as Buddhi Yoga) in Ch. II, the difference being that here we are given a central object for self-dedication in Sri Krishna as God, whereas there one is directed to know and realise one's Self.

13. With no ill-will against any being, friendly and compassionate, with no attachment to oneself or egotism, balanced in joys and sorrows, and forgiving,
14. the yogi is ever content, self-controlled and firm in resolve. With his Mind and Will (Buddhi) dedicated to Me, the bhakta (devotee) is dear to Me.
15. He who does not harass and is not harassed by the world and is free from the agitations of joy, anger and fear, is dear to Me.
16. He who expects nothing (from the external world), is pure and expert (in the discharge of duties), quiet, free from anxiety, and who renounces all undertakings (as actions with personal aims), he, My devotee, is dear to Me.
17. He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing both good and evil (transcending the conventional distinctions) and is filled with devotion, is dear to Me.
18. He who is the same (*i.e.*, without bias or prejudice) to friend and foe, unaffected by fame and blame, heat and cold, joys and sorrows, and free from all attachments,

19. who is unperturbed by praise or dispraise, who is silent, content with whatever comes, with no (love of) home, firm in resolve, and full of devotion,—he is dear to Me.
20. He who follows this nectar-like wisdom (dharma) as taught herein and is full of faith and is resigned to Me, is most dear to Me.

The above verses seem to be an excellent commentary on XVIII. 66. There is nothing in these verses that can be taken as distinguishing a 'bhakta' from an upasaka of the Unmanifest Brahman. The true bhakta is not concerned either with the amenities of life on earth requested as gifts from a personal God, by prayer and worship, or with 'celestial' enjoyments in a heaven.

Thus ends the discourse on Bhakti, the consecration of one's life to the Deity, with no personal cravings.

## CHAPTER III

### KARMA YOGA

Arjuna asks :

1—2. If Buddhi be superior to action, why do You enjoin on me these terrible actions ? My understanding is only confused by these perplexing words of Yours. Do tell me with certainty the one way by which I may have the true good.

The question appears rather needless, since the exposition by Sri Krishna of Sankhya and Buddhi yoga is sufficiently clear. The only ambiguity is perhaps in the double meaning given to the word Karma. This chapter seems to make matters worse in this respect by needlessly introducing ritualistic Karma, which was condemned in the previous chapter in unambiguous terms as that which does not lead to freedom from Karmic bondage and re-births. Apparently the question is put into Arjuna's mouth by the author to enable him to make a transition to the problem of Vedic sacrifices ; a device which the author employs—it may be an interpolator—for expressing his own view (with the object of justifying the performance of Vedic rituals in spite of their uselessness for attaining liberation) that they should be performed in the spirit of Karma yoga, with non-attachment. It appears to be only an expression of Vedic orthodoxy on the part of the author. Sri Krishna's explanation of Buddhi yoga in the previous chapter was

mainly to show how Karma (ordinary duty) was to be performed ; its intention was to discourage inaction.

The Lord's answer to Arjuna's query here does not seem to be to the point. He goes off at a tangent into the problem of ritualistic Karma. Besides, it may be noted there is no further mention in this chapter of the term Buddhi yoga made familiar by the previous one, though it is connected with the right attitude in action. There is, on the other hand, a mention of the expressions 'sankhya' and 'yoga' in verse 3 ; and we must presume that by the latter term Buddhi yoga was intended. What is discussed in this chapter as Karma yoga (or yoga simply) does not differ from the attitude of Buddhi yoga of the last chapter. There is nothing new in this chapter beyond the advocacy of Vedic ritualism with the aim of somehow dovetailing it into Karma yoga (or Buddhi yoga).

The Lord says :

3. I have already declared earlier (i.e., in the preceding chapter) that the path (of liberation) is two-fold. One is that of the yoga of knowledge (discrimination) of the Sankhyas, and the other that of the yoga of action of the yogins (apparently the Buddhi yuktas).

Where then does the path of liberation by ritualistic Karma come in at all ? Ritualistic sacrifices done to attain celestial enjoyments have previously been condemned as being desire-prompted and karmically binding. This section on Vedic sacrifices in the Gita breaks thus the continuity of the discourse on the path of liberation and introduces a contrary doctrine. We

notice in this chapter that verses 3 to 8 speak of Karma in the general sense of activities concerned with our normal duties in social relations and daily life. From 9 to 16 the reference is to the religious Vaidic rituals and sacrifices. 17 to 29 again deal with the ordinary non-religious activities. Finally in 30, the Lord advises that the fruit of all actions should be resigned to Him so that the doer may escape Karma-bandha and attain salvation.

(In chapter V. 4. it is clearly stated that Sankhya and Yoga are one and the same, leading to identical results. There also the indication is that they are two aspects of the same philosophic attitude. The 'contemplative' and the 'practical' life cannot be divorced from each other ; if isolated they lose their meaning in life.)

4. Man does not attain to Karmalessness simply by desisting from undertaking any action ; nor does he attain perfection (siddhi) by mere renunciation.
5. No one, even for an instant, can remain (alive) without any activity. Every one is bound to act perforce by dint of the 'gunas' (modes) of Prakriti.

In 4 above is an elucidation of the nature of the 'right' performance of Karma. In 5 Karma means only action in general ; it has not the narrow meaning of sacrificial ritual. To live and to be active are one and the same. Absence of movement is death. Prakriti always moves on, and it is the 'stuff' of our organic existence. We live in our bodies and not outside them. It has already been shown in the preceding chapter that the Self, though apparently confined in the body, is

metaphysically distinct and unaffected by Prakriti's activities in the body.

In 6 it is declared that he who, while controlling his organs of activity (by a sort of 'repression'), yet thinks on and yearns for the objects of desire would be only a foolish hypocrite. On the other hand, in 7 he who, while withdrawing his mind from the senses, is able to act without attachment, through the organs only, excels. (Such a one is the true Karma-yogi).

S. We are (therefore advised) to act, to do the duties (pertaining to our station in society). Action is superior to inaction. Life-activities (which are necessary for keeping oneself alive) would be impossible for the person who ceased to act.

So far, the explanation about action in general is clear. But verses 9 to 16, dealing with sacrificial ritual, are so sudden and abrupt that they seem to be interpolations by their irrelevancy to the context. To omit them from the chapter would rather enhance the value of the discourse than otherwise. [It is probable that they were introduced here by a later advocate of the Mimamsaka school. The whole Gita, as we now have it, does not appear to be a single author's work, but is rather a mosaic worked upon by various hands at different times. The original composition, if the situation alleged to have been created by Arjuna's refusal to fight be true, must have been more concise and short. The contradictory doctrines, repetitions and needless elaborations may not have existed in its original form. Even a whole chapter

like the Eleventh (which has no metaphysical value whatever) may have been a later addition, as also large portions in chapters like the Tenth].

From 9 on we have a digression upon sacrificial actions. A justification of these actions by a "metaphysical" figure of speech is attempted. This digression cannot be considered as any part of the Gita-Upanishad or Brahma-vidya or yoga-sastra. The 'Karma of sacrifice' is dovetailed into Karma-yoga as a part of man's 'duty,' by dragging down Brahma, a common word both for the Upanishadic Brahman (neuter) and the cosmological creator (the male God), into the context. If we also note that the Vedic sacrifices were associated with the Dwija castes, whereas the general tenor of the Gita doctrine is above caste and sex and has an appeal to the whole of humanity, the utter irrelevance of this section on sacrifices becomes quite clear. The Yajna-karma, religious sacrifice, is extolled here as non-binding, unlike other forms of religious rites; it is even insisted on as something that should not be given up. It is upheld as necessary for the welfare of the world and the individual; it should be performed as a variety of Karma yoga without attachment (such as a hankering after celestial enjoyments).

[The word 'Yajna' is interpreted by some 'modernists'—under the influence of occidental learning and outlook on life—as 'service' to others and 'self-sacrifice.' Though such service and the sentiment behind it are laudable on other grounds, they are not meant in this context. 'Yajna' is a religious duty towards the Vedic gods as the governors of the world-order,—an idea that is common to all religions.]

From 10 to 16 the relation between gods and men as mutually bound by the religious yajna-karma is explained. The Vedic injunction, 'Let one desirous of heaven perform sacrifice,' is now interpreted in consistency with the Gita spirit of action done *without attachment*. The artificiality of this compromise is apparent. There could be no need for 'sacrifice' if one did not want the celestial worlds.

The creator (Brahma) created men along with sacrifices and enjoined that the latter should be performed for human welfare.

This statement is against the Sankhyan and the Vedantic cosmologies. It is popular theology that speaks of a creation and God speaking and giving laws to men.

Sacrifice is the 'cow' that gives what one desires, and conduces to human welfare. Gods and men serve each other by sacrifice; it is for their mutual benefit. If we take what is given us by the gods without compensating sacrifices, we shall be only thieves. The remains of a sacrifice should be eaten by the righteous to have their sins cleansed. He eats sin who eats without sacrificial offering (literally, who cooks for himself alone). Living beings come from food; food from rain; rain from sacrifice; and sacrifice from action (Karma). Karma comes from Brahma and Brahma from Akshara. Hence Brahma is always present in sacrifice (yajna). One who does not conform to this cycle of sequences becomes a sinner, short-lived, sense-sunk, and lives in vain (like a beast).

A more elaborate and figurative exaltation of yajna (sacrifice), apparently of a different school of thought (or cult), is found in the next chapter (verses 24 to 32). It was probably associated with some types of 'yogic' sadhana, and was introduced into that chapter by another 'interested' party !

In verse 17 we come back (as abruptly) to the main theme of Karma yoga.

He whose delight is in the Self, who is satisfied in the Self and who finds fullness in the Self alone, has nought to do (as sacrificial duty).

This is certainly different from the previous doctrine of yajna. It is the same ideal that was discussed as Buddhi yoga in the preceding chapter. Yajna-sacrifice can have no bearing on an individual who seeks the pure Self. No action can be imposed on such an individual as a religious obligation.

18. To one so centred in Atma there is nothing on earth that is either done or not done as an object of desire ; nor is there anything for such a one to be obtained from any being whatever (including the gods of any heaven, by means of any sacrifice).

19. Hence all actions that require to be done (because we have to live) should be performed always without attachment (personal gain) at all. Man attains the highest, the supreme state (Param) when he so acts.

The above two verses show clearly that ritualistic sacrifices cannot be imposed as duties on the seeker after the Self. (That is why we regard the verses 9 to 16 in

this chapter as interpolations made by an interested party).

As illustrative of the philosophic attitude towards one's actions whilst engaged in their performance because they are enjoined by one's position in the world and society, verse 20 cites the instances of the philosopher King Janaka and other sages. Actions such as theirs are for the sake of social welfare, unity and good government (*loka-sangraha*) and not for any personal gain of the actor. These actions should not be abandoned or sought shy of (as Arjuna wanted to do on the battle-field). One should not run away from one's duties that devolve on one because of one's social position, and betake oneself to hills and forests as a recluse. Painful or pleasurable, one must do one's duty by society. One shall thus attain perfection even while acting. (Cf. V. 15.)

21. The person of status in a society will be an example to others. The less discriminating common people have a tendency to imitate him. He must be to them as an ideal in the performance of duties.

The wise are few ; the ignorant many. Hence what the exemplary individual does will be followed by the many. The 'sreshta,' the leader, should therefore act so as not to mislead the followers. He represents the 'aristocracy' of wise men who should guide the rest. In the next verse Sri Krishna cites Himself as such a leader for the purpose.

22. He, (as having attained or) being Himself the Supreme, has nothing to achieve in any of the three worlds by action, nothing to gain

which He did not already possess ; yet He engages Himself in the activities (of the world for the sake of loka-sangraha, the unity of humanity).

There is, of course, no analogy to Arjuna's position here ; but he has to imitate the Lord for attaining perfection. The activities of the sages should not be taken as yajna in the sense of social service, but as *duties* arising from their exalted status, for loka-sangraha, duties they owe to the society from which they evolved to their present position.

23—25. If the Lord should fail to act untouched by weariness even for a moment the rest of the world would follow His example, and the morale of the world would be destroyed in consequence. The world-order would disintegrate and the Lord would be responsible for the consequent world confusion. Humanity would then be destroyed. (This is because as Vishnu He is the protector). Just as the ignorant act with attachment to the fruit, so the wise one should also act but without attachment, for the sake of the welfare and stability of humanity.

It is to be noted here that the criticisms levelled against the Vedantic ethics, that it leads to inaction and indifference to social welfare, that social 'service' is outside its ideals and that it tends to passivity and pacifism of the wrong type, allowing evil to prevail and humanity go to ruin without extending any helping hand,—in short that it lacks the 'positive' virtues,—are mostly mistaken, if not prejudiced. If one properly

appreciates the Gita ideal of action, there can be no room for such criticisms. All 'service' that one can render by one's position in society is only one's *duty*. There is no warrant for going beyond one's position in society to do so-called social service; it might lead to dangerous interference and disservice if one should ignore one's own status and position. Cf. 35.

It is also supposed by some Westerners (whose 'ideologies' are based on different foundations from those of the Hindus) that since the Gita and the (Upanishadic) Vedanta preach only activity without attachment, there would be no psychological inducement or incentive to action. This criticism is also beside the point. It is based on a confusion between the 'end or aim' of an action and the motive of personal gain by 'attachment to its fruit.' It is due to the non-Vedantic standpoint of the critics. Absence of personal attachment in action does not mean that an end or aim is absent. The West has no ideal of life such as Freedom from Karma and compulsory re-births. Its conception of human evolution extends only to a single birth here (—and not all manage to live the normal span of human life—) and to normal moral or religious ideals. Its metaphysics and religion have different assumptions from those of Vedanta. Attachment to the fruits of action is forbidden in Vedanta only so that Karma-bandha may be avoided; there is no reference to the aim. It is the personal element that must be eliminated; the action is to be done from an 'impersonal' point of view. The reason is that Vedanta looks on all life as one and there is nothing personal in that One Life. No one, not even a lunatic, would act without an end in view. That there is an end like loka-sangraha aimed at without personal

attachment is clearly brought out by Sri Krishna's exposition of His own part in the world-scheme. Desirelessness has a technical meaning in Vedanta—'desire' being the same as personal attachment to the fruit of action. Action done without desire is technically quite different from action that has no aim or end in view in an objective sense. Every form of egotism however subtle it be should be eliminated to attain the Vedantic ideal of 'right action.' The Western 'ideology' is too egotistically self-conscious; hence their difficulty in appreciating the Vedantic point of view. Vedanta wants that the petty little self of our mortal life should make room for the One Universal Self that shines in all as the very foundation of their being, the One Atman of the Upanishads. One should act keeping in view this universality of all life and not one's little phenomenal personality. 'Immortality' is to be gained only by attaining this universal point of view; otherwise one would go only from death to death. The psychology of human behaviour, as a phenomenal self, is the same whether in the East or the West. It is the metaphysical point of view (of our noumenal existence) that is different. The 'desire' to attain the Universal is thus seen not as a 'desire' in the Vedantic sense. 'Desire' belongs technically to the level of the instinct-life of the animal which man shares; it functions for separateness and selfishness. Man, to become super-man, to be a real spiritual entity, must rise above the animal instinct level. One unites while the other divides. 'Spirit' is the term to connote unity, 'matter' to denote diversity.

Since the average man (we are yet only animals) is moved by personal desires and considerations, though

his action may have a "moral" value, the advice is given :

26. The wise person (or sage) should so act as not to confuse the understanding of the (average) ignorant man who acts from (personal motives and) attachment. He should perform well all actions with self-collectedness (i.e., with the universal Self in view).
27. It is only the ego-tainted individual (ahankara-vimudha-atma) that attributes to himself as agent the various activities resulting from the movements of the 'modes' (gunas) of Prakriti.
28. The person who knows the fundamental nature of the divisions of 'gunas' and their 'karmas' (Prakriti's modes and their functions) and understands that it is the 'gunas' that are working within the 'gunas,' does not get 'attached' (to Prakriti's activities as though they were his own).

Here the Gita accepts the Sankhyan views about 'nature' as made up of Guna and Karma, along with the concept of Tatvas (fundamentals or categories). The knower of Prakriti's modes and workings does not confuse himself with its workings, but looks on himself as the pure passive Purusha. This is the Sankhyan view of discrimination or Viveka which one should maintain to get free from Karma and re-birth, and thus attain the end, Kaivalya. This aspect of 'salvation' was explained in the previous chapter as Sankhya yoga. This standpoint, by whatever name it is called, seems to be also that of Vedanta, Buddhism and Jainism,—thus

showing the important place that Sankhya has in Indian philosophic thought.

29. Those who are deluded by the modes of Prakriti get attached (through confusion) to the activities of the gunas (modes). The person who knows all about these gunas should not cause confusion in the minds of those whose understanding is small.

The man possessed of a little knowledge will, as they say that 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing' has it, entrench himself in his knowledge as though it were the whole. He will not listen to what the sage would say. One must realise the littleness of one's knowledge before one is impelled to approach another for greater enlightenment. To volunteer enlightenment to the ignorant who do not ask for it would be like 'casting pearls before swine.' One ordinarily requires hard knocks from experience before one is impelled to go and seek for knowledge from those who know. Such is the value of error and pain.

30. Resigning all actions to Me, with your mind permeated with the thought of the Pure Self, and without being impelled by desire (hope for the fruit) or egoism, fight, giving up your nervousness.

Here is a reference by Sri Krishna to Himself as the Iswara under whose superintendence Prakriti works out its ways. The responsibility for one's actions (Arjuna's in this instance) will be His. If Arjuna refuses to fight, his resolve will be ahankara-tainted and the karmic responsibility his own. Arjuna can ease his mind only by self-surrender to the Lord. (Cf. XVIII. 66 and 59 to 60).

We find here the mind of Arjuna is worked upon step by step to look on Sri Krishna as the Lord of the world.

31. They who stand firm in this doctrine of Mine, full of trust and free from cavil, will be freed from all (taint arising from) actions.
32. (Conversely) Those who mock at My teaching and act not thereon are to be known as having lost all knowledge and intelligence. They fall (ultimately into the cycles of re-birth).
33. Even the man of (discriminative) knowledge acts in conformity with the laws of his prakritic qualities, (i.e., so long as he has to act in a body supplied to him by external nature). All beings follow (the determinations of) their Prakriti. How can restraint avail ?

The present constitution of beings, including man, being the result of cosmic Prakriti working as an 'external agent,' there can be no gain in trying to curb its inherent qualities. Hence 'mental aloofness' alone is recommended as the way of escape from its constraints, and of attaining freedom from Karma and rebirth. If one is re-born, one gets only a prakritic body whose organisation one cannot change—as evidenced in the lives of even avatars. That is why the desire not to be re-born after death is held as the goal.

This verse 33, however, should not be interpreted as a blank cheque to enable one to do what one pleases, taking refuge behind Prakriti's uncontrollability. Such an attitude will be only self-delusion, if not hypocrisy. The verse is intended only to emphasise the importance of unattachment.

34. Attractions and repulsions exist between the senses and their objects. One should strive not to get under their sway ; (that is, one should look on them as foreign to oneself). These (sense-object relations) are hindrances (on the Path of Self-Knowledge). One must be guarded against being fooled by them.
35. Even if the duties (Dharma) that one has to perform (as pertaining to one's position and status in society) should be devoid of merit (or pleasure), they should be preferred to those of another's (of another station and function), however pleasing these latter might be. It is better to perish in the performance of one's own Dharma (than to 'live' by that of another). Another's Dharma is dangerous (to one).

This is one of the most famous of Gita statements (also repeated with a slight change at XVIII. 47). It is expressive of the fundamental principle of the Hindu social organisation (anyway, as it obtained in ancient times, though now it is the reverse that seems to be the fact, the rule becoming the exception). This verse summarises the purport of Sri Krishna's advice to Arjuna,—to fight as a born Kshatriya. To make this 'ideal of duty' applicable in modern times where birth-determined castes and their dharma are in confusion, we may have to generalise the statement and say that one should understand oneself, one's own psycho-physical constitution, and function in accordance therewith, without failing in the discharge of one's duties that one so takes up.

There will be no sin incurred in doing one's duty, however much it might be lacking in merit or pleasure,—as, for example, in the case of a hangman—so long as it is done without any attachment. It is only where one wants to change one's dharma (whether it devolves by birth or otherwise) that 'personal attachment' finds a place in one's choice. Hence to desire to take up another's karma or dharma will be to get into 'bondage'; whereas restricting oneself to one's own dharma would help one to act un-attached.\*

Dharma is a peculiar concept in Indian thought (not translatable by a single word in English) and its uniqueness arises from the nature of the ancient Hindu social polity. It indicates one's duties in life as determined (almost always at birth) by one's place in society. It is not what can be 'chosen' at random with no relation to the demands of the social structure in which one finds oneself born. It is what may be spoken of as determined by one's past karma and not by present choice.

Next Arjuna puts a rather naive question after having heard so much of Prakriti's inherent tendencies and the fact that Purusha is distinct from it :

36. Why does man tend to commit sin even when he desires to be free from it, as though he were forcibly impelled to do so ?

It is rather strange that even the Gita lends support here to the view that assumes sin or evil *per se* as a positive fact in nature. Such an assumption is as unphilosophic as the view of some religions that our very birth

\* Hence change of faith by 'conversion' is against the spirit of Hindu Dharma.

is due to an act of sin ! If one should take one's stand on the Vedantic postulate of the utter Unity of all nature in Brahman, there can be no place for any 'dualism' such as good and evil. These two terms only indicate a 'relative' opposition resulting from our modes of valuation, and not two 'real' opposites. Nature by itself is only *non-moral*. If certain propensities to action are due to the characteristics of Prakriti, such as our natural instinct-impulses, then by themselves they can be considered merely as non-moral and not as 'evil.' They appear as evil or sin only to one who tries to overcome them in his endeavour to progress along the path towards a higher status of being, when these established impulses offer resistance to change, and not otherwise. Evil is thus not a fact of nature, or a unique creation by an independent force. Every thing is "good" in its place, and 'evil' is like dirt in the wrong place. To 'sin,' no doubt, appears easy, because it represents action along the line of least resistance, that is, in conformity with the established instincts of animal behaviour.

Both Arjuna's question and Sri Krishna's answer seem to be based on the wrong assumption that sin or evil exists as a fact, as something absolute and not relative. Prakriti certainly is not evil *per se* in any metaphysical sense. On the other hand, the resistance offered by our instincts such as anger, fear, etc., when we try to curb them, is the essential condition of the evolution of true individuality in us. Nature (Prakriti) should be considered as the ground or field, nay, our very "mother" principle, for the building up of independent individuality in man, and as such is 'good' and not 'evil.' True individuality is just the antithesis of the

phenomenon of personality (egotistic self-consciousness of the average man) that is only a 'product' of Prakriti. It is this phenomenal personality, which the normal man believes himself to be and which acts prompted by desire-impulses (the instincts in man), that requires to be transmuted into true individuality by the knowledge of the real Self that shines in all beings (from one and the same source, Kshetrajna).

In 37, Sri Krishna answers Arjuna's doubt by saying that sin arises from the 'Rajasic' characteristic of Prakriti in the form of the impulses of Kama and Krodha (generalised forms of animal 'appetites and aversions'); this Rajasic nature is most insatiable, inducing us to do evil. It is our great enemy. (This answer assumes an absolutely evil aspect of nature. To our mind such an assumption of dualism in ethics leads only to the suicide of all morality, making 'evil,' as an 'absolute,' ineradicable. The very impulses of Kama and Krodha that stand in the way of Man's progress are just what are "good" in the life of wild animals for their very existence. Good and evil should be understood only in a relative sense if we believe in progress consistent with the variety of existence in nature).

38—39. As a flame is surrounded by smoke, as the mirror surface is covered by dust, as the embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so this (the world or man form) is enveloped by it (the Rajas quality). Our intellect is similarly surrounded by this eternal enemy of the wise in the guise of desire, the insatiable fire in us.

These similes are entirely misleading in depicting

evil as 'positive.' They are only popular notions and have no philosophic justification.

40. (The Sankhyan categories of) the senses, the mind and Buddhi are said to be its seat. Man is deluded by his knowledge being clouded in these (three categories by Rajas).

This 'explanation' is rather confusing. If the very 'instruments' of knowledge are thus tainted, how is pure knowledge possible? How can they be purified and by whom? By what faculty and by whom is this fact of being deluded discovered?

In 41, we are asked first to begin with the control of the senses and conquer this great destroyer of jnana and vijnana.

What is meant by the control of the senses, when they only function as they are constituted to function? This injunction to control them (if by 'control' repression is meant) looks almost like 'belling the cat.'

Jnana seems to stand for synthetic knowledge, and vijnana for discriminative or analytic understanding,—the conceptual and the perceptual varieties of human intelligence. Probably jnana is the function of Buddhi and vijnana of Manas. Later on at XIII. 1—11, jnana is given a generalised meaning in a metaphysico-moral sense. Jnana may stand for the Vedantic type of monistic knowledge, and vijnana for knowledge of the Sankhyan variety of tatva-analysis of the cosmic constitution.

In 42—43, the closing verses of the chapter, we have an analysis in graded form of the knowledge-giving factors of the human psychic constitution, sense-knowledge being the lowest and Buddhi the highest, with Manas in the middle. These three form the instruments

of knowledge in man. This classification is authorised by the Upanishads also. The Para beyond Buddhi is taken as the Self. In 43, it is stated that one established in the Self, the Para that is beyond Buddhi, and controlling oneself by the Self, should strive to conquer the difficult enemy that exists in the form of our Kama nature.

It is "Kama," the personal desire-nature, that divides men from one another, bringing on conflicts between them by becoming the basis of the 'meum and tuum' which characterise our mortal lives and strifes. Until this nature is subdued, the 'saving knowledge,' jnana, of the One Universal Life in all (Brahman) cannot be obtained. Hence Kama is taken as our greatest enemy. 'Manas,' as a variety of sense, may be affected by Rajas and Kama. But why Buddhi also should be affected is not clear. If there be a faculty in us by which we are to subdue the senses and transcend Kama and Krodha, it should be Buddhi itself. How are we to be saved from this enemy, Rajas, if Buddhi also should be tainted by it, and if the Pure Self as Purusha should remain only as a 'passive witness'? On the other hand, we have to assume that the Pure Self in man, as the reflection of the Highest, the Universal Spirit of the cosmos, Itself acts as the 'uplifting' Force in us for enabling us to stand as muktas or free souls, (just as the same Supreme Spirit Itself works as the 'Cause' of the existence of the Cosmos for serving as the Field for the evolution of Souls). It cannot therefore be a mere 'passive watcher.' No man can be saved by 'another.' It is the one Supreme Spirit alone existing as the innermost core of our being, as our own Self, that is our only saviour.

## CHAPTER IV

### JNANA YOGA

In 1 to 3 Sri Krishna, opening this chapter, says, that the Karma Yoga he has been explaining to Arjuna was originally revealed by Him to Vivaswan (the Sun, the progenitor of the solar Kshatriya clan) who in turn instructed his son, Manu ; and Manu, his son Ikshvaku, and so on, that tradition being handed down for generations to various kingly sages. But this yoga so revealed was lost by the efflux of time, 'the great destroyer.' (It is strange, however, that "Time" should have killed a revelation that was given by the Lord Himself, whereas one should have expected it to thrive unbroken with the progress of time !) Now it is revealed by the Lord Himself personally to Arjuna, this ancient yoga, the highest secret, to His most beloved friend and devotee.

At this point Arjuna is made by the author (who seems to represent him as a child asking simple questions) to put rather a puerile question which we should have scarcely expected from an enlightened prince of the Aryan race.

4. Vivaswan was born earlier whereas You were born later. How am I to understand that You revealed this (yoga) in the beginning ?

This question is apparently a poetic device that the author uses to exalt the eminence of Sri Krishna as an Avatar of Vishnu Himself. It is however not intelligible why God Himself, incarnate and living amongst

men, could not impress His divinity on persons like Duryodhana and others, or bring about peace between the rival clans. God, as the inmost spirit dwelling in all beings, if He should come and live with us, should certainly be able to change our animal nature into true humanity by His very presence, without having recourse to killing. Fighting and killing are 'arguments' employed by the animal-men to 'convince' their enemies; they cannot be the means that a divine being employs. We are yet to discover the correct connotation of the God-conception; we should give up the degenerate views that we now entertain of God by our anthropomorphisation, which make Him but a magnified animal-man, in whose name we fight with one another as though each party had exclusive possession of the one 'true God'—as well as a monopoly of the way to reach Him!

Sri Krishna answers Arjuna's simple question by declaring the well-known belief of the Hindus about re-births and avatars.

5. Many have been My births that are past, as also of yours. I remember them all, but you know them not.

[In the Puranas it is stated that Sri Krishna and Arjuna existed as the two ancient Rishis, Narayana and Nara, performing penances, and fighting against the various enemies of the gods. But how they happen now to so differ in their abilities and knowledge is not made clear].

6—8. Though unborn, inexhaustible and Lord of all beings, I give birth to Myself by My own power of Maya, remaining in My own Prak-

riti ; to establish Dharma, whenever it decays and unrighteousness is exalted, to protect the good and destroy the wicked,—(I am born) from age to age.

This is the function of Vishnu as the Protector of the world. Yet the world seems to require periodical ‘repairs’ like any machine made by man, decay and dissolution being its main features. Will it ever be in perfect working order ?

9. One who knows all about My divine births and actions will not have to return to births after death, but comes to Me (enters My state).

This verse should not be interpreted as a ‘made easy’ solution of salvation. It indicates an *intensive* knowledge of the mysteries of cosmic evolution, and assumes, thus, ability to take up one’s evolution into one’s own hands.

10. Becoming freed from desires, anger and fear, with their minds fully given to Me and taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire of Knowledge (jnana-tapas, entire absorption in the contemplation of the Deity,—similar to the intellectual love of God, of Spinoza), many have entered into My state (*i.e.*, the pure level representing Sri Krishna’s cosmic abode).

11. In whatever manner men try to reach Me (as their own peculiar conception of God-head), even in that manner do I receive them. All men take to the path that leads to Me alone, (whatever its apparent direction).



of the Hindu caste distinction as an Eternal order, having the stamp of the Deity's sanction. But the emphasis may be on the *function* (*Karma*) of the various classes based on their gunas (modes); there is no mention made of *births* into a particular caste. The description of the Lord as the 'author' but not the 'actor' is a paradox employed to show that Iswara is like a 'superintendent' only and that it is Prakriti (Nature) that is really concerned in these activities of the distribution of karmas (functions). These karmic distributions made by Prakriti to the various individuals in sending them to births should be looked on not as the result of the person's past karma, but as due to the main sankalpa (scheme of evolution) of Iswara to evolve the various jivas to full self-hood, allotting to each definite lines of life and experience. The individual jiva now is only an embryonic being and cannot be credited with any ability in self-direction. To speak of a beginningless past karma in this connection would be a futile attempt at explanation since it leads to a meaningless infinite regress. What the evolving jiva contributes would be only a *minor* factor (in proportion to the strength of its individuality and self-consciousness) that is taken up into the major scheme involved in the sankalpa of the Deity. It is thus we have a pre-scheduled life determined at our birth (as astrologers would say) which we wrongly call fate or destiny, but which in reality is the kindly and loving scheme of Providence designed for our evolution and indicates the parental care which Nature and the Deity are bestowing upon us. Such a schedule of life we work out in detail on earth to gain experience and knowledge. Hence, as the Gita teaches, we should not attribute to ourselves any agency in these phenomenal lives of ours.

They are, as we have previously noted, like the roles which an actor takes up in a series of different dramatic plays. There can be no real Karma or, rather, 'Kartritva,' metaphysically speaking, for the individual jiva at the present stage of evolution ; he is yet to attain majority-status to take up the responsibilities of independent existence ; he must first become a real mukta. That is why, Vedantly, there is no *problem of Freedom!* We are now like any other animal or even sub-animal creation, living and acting according to a plan of which we are not authors. If, as alleged, we had been pure-knowledged selves at the very beginning of creation we should not have been drawn into this samsaric existence and suffering at all. Our personal 'contributions' to the schedule of life consist only of consequences of errors arising from failing to take advantage of the opportunities of life to gain true Self-knowledge and avoid false conceptions of the Self. That is the only Karma, if we can so call it, for which we may regard the individual as responsible.

The origin of caste must be sought in the early social conditions (which do not prevail now) and their evolution. Even the Puranas say that in the First Age, the Krita, there was no caste, but only one class. Orthodox people, however, generally quote this Gita verse as though it were an authority for the eternity of the caste system, ordained by God. There is nothing more said about caste in this chapter and this verse stands in isolation. It might in all probability be an interpolation. Something more about the distribution of caste functions is given in the last chapter.

14. Actions do not stain Me, nor am I desirous of

their fruit. One who knows Me thus becomes free from Karmas.

What the Lord is in relation to the cosmic play, that should each jiva be towards the schedule of life he works out here in a body. He will then be not bound, that is, he will have no reason to grieve for what is lost or to be elated at what is gained. It is Prakriti that is playing before him and he only "sees and enjoys." It is such mental aloofness in one's actions that the verse suggests when it speaks of knowing the Lord as unaffected by the play of cosmic Prakriti.

15. Understanding thus, Karma was performed of yore by our forefathers desiring emancipation. Therefore do you also as they did before.

This Karma cannot be interpreted as referring to religious ritualism, but only as denoting our normal activities of life.

A further elucidation of the nature of Karma, action and non-action is next given.

16. 'What is Karma, what Akarma ?' is a problem which perplexes even the wise. I shall explain to you what Karma is, knowing which you will be freed from evil.
17. One must needs distinguish Karma, Vikarma and Akarma from one another. The ways of Karma are subtle indeed.

The three terms mean action, bad action and non-action.

18. One who sees no-action in action, and action in no-action, is the wise one amongst men, self-collected and the doer of fully performed action, (*i.e.*, he rightly performs all actions).

Here the Lord tries to put in a nut-shell (using a paradoxical expression as at II. 69) the view that, by acting with the requisite spirit of non-attachment, one (remains Karma-free, and) is non-active in a metaphysical sense; and that if one is inactive on purpose, one is really active by reason of such purposiveness. Inaction when desire-prompted is really negative action. The main point is the attitude of unattachment by which, acting or non-acting, one does not become the agent or actor. Only the 'yukta' maintains the requisite mental balance, and hence he well performs all his duties. He does what he should do as duty and refrains from any actions that are desire-born. Such is the spirit of Karma yoga advocated in the Gita.

The following 4 verses explain the paradox of 18: clearly.

19. He whose undertakings are all free from desire-born motives, and whose actions (karmas) are burnt up by the fire of knowledge (of oneself being only the Pure Self) is known as a wise person (or sage).

This is non-action in action, since the individual, while acting, identifies himself with the Pure Self and remains unattached to the workings of Prakriti. Desire is the name of the impulses in man which correspond to the instincts in the animal. Allowing oneself to be drawn by them, instead of controlling them, would be only reducing oneself to the level of the beast. Their-

tendency is to blind man to his true nature as Atman, to his unity with the One Origin of all life, and to prompt him to behave selfishly for personal gain. To control them, keeping in view the Vedantic ideal of the unity of the individual with the Whole, is the foundation of the Upanishadic ethics (as also of Sankhya and Buddhism). It can be easily seen that such an ideal includes all our moral virtues. Vice or evil arises where one allows oneself to be carried away by 'desires' for personal gain. If egotism or ahankara is transcended, i.e., is transmuted by a psychological sublimation into 'true individuality' in which one's consciousness is directly aware of the unity of all life, then the individual will be incapable of doing any evil and thus remain beyond good and evil. The Vedantic ideal, however, is not merely moral; it aims at a metaphysical end. But this end cannot be attained until all evil is eradicated. No true Vedantin can be guilty of a vice or evil action.

20. Hence dissociating oneself from the (selfish) craving for the fruit of actions, ever-content and non-dependent, one even if engaged in action should be understood as a non-actor.
21. One who is free from cravings, who is self-controlled and free from any desire for possessions, doing actions by the body alone (i.e., with the mind unattached) is unaffected (or unsoiled) by action.
22. He who is content with whatever accrues spontaneously, rising above the pairs of 'opposites,' without envy, balanced in success and failure, is the person who though acting is never bound.

23. He who is devoid of attachment and free, whose mind remains at rest in (Self-) knowledge and whose actions are of the nature of sacrifice (that is, dedication to the Lord, and not Vedic yajna) has all his actions dissolved (without their affecting him as karma).

So far, the attitude of one who wants to be freed from karmic bondage, while acting, has been described. It however appears to be a mere 'subjective' attitude and negative. Nothing that is positive and objective can be found in such an attitude. Does this satisfy our rational demand for a positive state of being in the cosmic scheme ? Is the story of the long evolution behind us to end only in a negative state of rest where 'to be' does not connote anything ? Do we not seem to require a new metaphysic of human destiny beyond what Sankhya or Vedanta offers us ? Should we not say that our ultimate aim is one of *real being as a functioning entity* after passing through the phantom personalities that now we are in the cosmic process ? The Upanishads also say that we are to move on from 'asat' to 'sat,' from death to deathlessness, and from darkness to light (from ignorance to enlightenment). Where and how such an 'ideal' is to be a fact is not yet known to us. It is not escape from existence but establishing ourselves in it in a spirit of universality, that must be the Goal of evolution, for only then will true freedom be experienced by us as muktas.

Next, in 24 figurative language is used, the analogy of a Vedic sacrifice being brought in, to describe the unity of Brahman, of the actor, the action and the acted upon, as the result of action performed with the requi-

site metaphysical attitude (action, that is, that would not bind the individual but would tend to his liberation).

**24.** Brahman is the act of offering and the offered material ; Brahman is the fire into which the offering (such as ghee, etc.) is thrown ; the sacrifice is Brahman as well ; he reaches Brahman alone who does the sacrificial action, intent on Brahman.

This is like the benediction that a Vedantly minded person utters at the end of a religious karma, —‘Sarvam Brahmarpanamastu,’ (may all this be assigned to Brahman)—so as to avoid karma-bandha !

From 25 to 30 we have descriptions of varieties of sacrificial austerities (of which we have no knowledge at present) and which might represent various forms of ‘tapas’ that were probably in vogue at the time when this section of the Gita was added on (and which the author, whoever he might have been, incorporated into this Gita symposium).

**25—30.** Some sacrifice to the Gods, others to the fire of Brahman, some do sacrifice by restraining the senses such as hearing, etc. ; some sacrifice the objects of the senses such as sound, etc., into the fire of the senses. Others sacrifice the functions of sense and of life (Prana) into the fire of wisdom-lighted self-control. There are others who sacrifice riches, austerities, yoga, study of sacred scriptures and jnana, ever concentrated and determined in their vows. Still others sacrifice life-breaths (pranas), their out-breath-

ings in their in-breathings and vice versa, controlling their breathings. Some others control their eating and sacrifice prana in prana. These are all knowers of sacrifice and destroy their sins thereby.

31. They live on what is left after such sacrifice as (amrita) nectar, and reach the Eternal Brahman. This world is not for the non-sacrificers. How then can the other (world) be (for the non-sacrificer) ?

All the above descriptions seem to us to be quite out of place in the Gita, and indicate only the author's belief in the creed of sacrifices. They may only represent, on the analogy of Vedic sacrifices, certain forms of Tapas such as we find in Puranic stories which are described as being resorted to to obtain the favour of some 'gods' or develop some 'siddhis' (super-natural powers). They cannot have any value for one who seeks to know Brahman or attain immortality.

32. (Here is a dogmatic assertion put into the mouth of Sri Krishna, that) all these varieties of sacrifice proceeded out of Brahma's mouth (as orders or revelations) and that all of them are born of action (Karma or ritual). To know them thus enables one to attain freedom.

33. Better than the sacrifice of any concrete thing (dravya) is the sacrifice (apparently a variety of contemplation) of knowledge. All Karmas find their goal in Jnana (the saving knowledge).

It is to acquire knowledge through experience that

we seem to have been thrust into this life of strife and mortality on earth. It is by the tasting of the "fruit of the Tree of Knowledge" that we become self-conscious and develop individuality. From the primitive (original) "innocence" or no-knowledge (avidya) that should have existed when we were started in evolution we are to evolve into knowing beings through experience. Through such experience we obtain full self-knowledge, the so-called 'knowing Brahman'; and thereby knowing ourselves as one with the Origin of all existence, we are said to attain immortality which is the characteristic result of Brahma-knowledge. "To know Brahman is to become one with It." That means that from our present negative type of being we evolve into positive entities through such 'Jnana.'

34. This (way to realise Brahman) we are to learn from those who have known the ultimate essence of things by approaching them with the proper attitude of discipleship, service, humility and proper enquiry.

Knowledge is *direct* experiencing by oneself, not something that can be got at second hand or from external sources. Hence the teachers acting as Gurus can only *direct* the pupil, when properly approached, to know for himself; they cannot *give* knowledge.

35. When such knowledge is acquired you will not fall again into this confusion (of mixing up the Self with the body-prakriti). By such knowledge you will (also) be able to realise that all beings are in the Self and therefore in Me.

This verse shows that all beings have their existence in Brahman conceived as the Atman (both cosmically and microcosmically). The perception of such unity of Brahman is the only knowledge that is worthy of the name (of Jnana). It is something of the nature of *direct conscious experience*. It cannot anyway be in the form in which Sri Krishna showed Himself to Arjuna, as described in the Eleventh Chapter—to which this verse is sometimes taken as a pointer!

36—41. Even when one is immersed in sin as the most sinful of men, one sails safely over it (sin) by the raft of knowledge. Just as fire reduces to ashes the faggots thrown into it, so also (this saving) knowledge burns away all actions (*i.e.*, their binding character). There is nothing equal to knowledge as a purifier. One becoming perfect in yoga would be able to realise it in oneself (directly) in due time. One who is full of faith will obtain the requisite knowledge by one's earnestness and self-control. Having obtained it one attains quickly supreme peace. The fool, devoid of faith, and ever doubting, gets lost. Neither this world nor the next nor happiness exists for the doubting soul. One who renounces actions by Yoga (as explained earlier about a-karma and Karma yoga), whose doubts are solved by knowledge and who is self-possessed, is never bound by action (while performing them).

42. Hence cutting off this ignorance-born doubt of yours by the sword of knowledge, be esta-

blished in yoga and stand (as a true man of Self-Knowledge to do your duty).

This chapter is called Jnana yoga, though only a part of it is concerned with the subject while a good portion is taken up with a number of other topics. However there is not any specially new information given here beyond what was stated in the earlier chapters, namely, that we should not identify ourselves with the workings of our bodies which are intended to be only 'means' for us to obtain experience and which work according to the plan of Iswara who alone is their "controller." To Him no Karma acts as a bond, for there is no "other" to Him since He is Himself the All. If we in our life and activities are centred in the Deity, we also shall be able to stand "unbound."

## CHAPTER V

### SANYASA YOGA

1. Arjuna asks : Sanyasa of actions as well as Yoga was praised by You. Tell me definitely which of the two is superior.

We find that no room was given in the previous discussions for making any such hard and fast distinction. Throughout it has been shown that whatever actions are done, whether religious sacrifices or ordinary duties and daily routine, one's mind should be detached from craving for their fruit and from the notion of oneself being the actor or agent. Why should Arjuna raise such a question now ? Apparently the author is needlessly introducing a confusion. We notice, for example, that there is a sudden change from the 'opposition' of Sanyasa and Yoga with which the chapter begins, to an 'opposition' of Sankhya and Yoga in verse 4. This seems to indicate that a different author took liberties with the text. Verse 6 makes matters worse, as though there were a real 'opposition' and Sanyasa meant something distinct by itself. Sanyasa as 'Yoga' was separately discussed again in the last chapter. It is the introduction of the term 'Sanyasa' in this Chapter V that is the source of the confusion. The chapter seems to deal more with what is popularly known as the 'Jivan-Mukta' state, though the matter has already been fully explained in the previous chapters.

Here Sri Krishna is made to declare that a difference existed between Sanyasa and Yoga. He answers :

2. Renunciation of (all) action (Sanyasa) and Yoga by action (Karma yoga of Chapter III) both lead to the highest perfection (or bliss); of the two Karma yoga is superior to Karma sanyasa.

But any distinction between the two is negated by the Lord Himself in the very opening of the next chapter ! The distinction here made must, therefore, be due to the author's anxiety to show that Nitya-karma (obligatory religious ritual) in deference to the Vedic creed should not be renounced but should be performed in the spirit of Karma yoga, that is, with mental unattachment. This prejudice of the author was fathered on Sri Krishna. Advaitic sanyasins give up the so-called Vaidic Nitya-karma while Vaishnava recluses perform it. It appears as a matter of indifference whether it is performed or not, according to the attitude of the person concerned. Even 'non-action' according to the Gita may be resorted to by mental unattachment ! It has already been shown that sacrifices, etc., were not intended for a knowledge of the Self, but only for heavenly enjoyments. If so, why should a seeker of the Self perform them even with a detached mind ? It is only orthodoxy that wants them performed !

Verse 3 attempts to clear the doubt (unsuccessfully, as it seems to us) by showing that the true Karma yogi is really the Sanyasi, thus making the second verse containing Sri Krishna's answer and Arjuna's query irrelevant.

The Karma yogi described here (as well as in the earlier chapters) becomes the Nitya Sanyasi—one who is always unattached and therefore a true renouncer.

3. He should be known as always a Sanyasi, who neither hates nor desires and is free from the pairs of opposites (such as pain and pleasure). He easily gets free from bondage.

How is this definition different from the previous descriptions of the Karma yogi ? The distinction made in verse 2 appears to be merely nominal, indicating no real difference. Moreover, even a Grihastha (of the Asrama of the house-holders) can be in this sense a 'Sanyasi' without resorting to the formal asrama of Sanyasa. The Sanyasa asrama, according to the Gita, would be a needless formality which no one with a sense of responsibility to the social order should take. There will be nothing specially to be gained by it,—except escape from troublesome duties !

4. Sankhya and Yoga are regarded as different by the uninstructed, not by pandits (those who know). He who is established in one obtains the result of both.

Here is a sudden jump from 'Sanyasa and Yoga' to 'Sankhya and Yoga,' for reasons that the author alone should know. The verse clearly says that they are identical—as explained in Chapter II. Sankhyan knowledge of the distinction of the Pure Self from Prakriti leads to action done with detachment; this must be the same as Karma yoga (or Sanyasa as here mentioned) and the Buddhi yoga of Chapter II. Knowledge cannot be abstracted from the consequent action. The actions of an individual (except those of a hypocrite) reveal naturally his knowledge and belief.

5. The goal which is attained by the Sankhyas is also reached by the Yogis. Only he who

understands that Sankhya and Yoga are one truly knows.

It is the same idea as was explained earlier. (We suspect that the expression 'yogaih' used on an analogy to 'sankhyaih' is rather unusual. Should it not be 'yogibhih'?).

When we come to the next verse there is an abrupt jump back from Sankhya to Sanyasa ! Certainly they are not synonymous. Is this a confusion in the author's mind or an interpolation ? There is further an irrelevant remark about the difficulty of the path of Sanyasa. Why and how it is difficult is not made clear.

6. But without Yoga (Karma yoga) Sanyasa or renunciation is difficult to achieve. The sage who is harmonised by Yoga soon reaches Brahman.

What this yoga is is to be gathered from the succeeding verses. They however do not give anything more than what was indicated as Buddhi yoga in Chapter II where it is intimately associated with the Sankhya doctrine of discrimination (Viveka). But nothing was said there about any difficulty in following Buddhi yoga. How then can any difficulty in following it arise now ? The author apparently seems to waver in his opinion of Sanyasa.

In the next chapter is taken up the link with Sanyasa in the proper sense of the term, that of renouncing the usual Vaidic rites and Nitya Karma in the pursuit, unhindered, of a contemplative life dedicated to attaining a consciousness of the Self. Arjuna's query

at the beginning of this chapter seems to find its answer there.

7. He who is harmonised by yoga, pure and self-controlled, and whose senses are conquered and whose Self is in unity with the selves of all beings, while acting, is not contaminated by such activity.

It is not activity as such that 'contaminates' the person acting but the mental attitude with which he acts. The Gita should not be taken as a tirade against action. It aims to teach us how we are to be self-controlled while acting, so as not to get karmically bound. One cannot be inactive and live; one should only dissociate oneself from the notion of being an actor or agent, nor should one seek any personal gain.

8—10. The yukta, the self-harmonised person, the knower of Reality, understands that he himself does nothing even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, and breathing. He knows that only the senses are active in their objects (while he remains a passive looker-on) when speaking, giving, holding, opening and closing the eyes. He who acts, resigning all his doings to Brahman and with no attachment (to himself), is unaffected by any evil like a lotus leaf on water which does not wet it.

[The discourse here, as well as at so many other places in the Gita, so repeatedly moving round and round the same topic—while leaving aside so many other connected metaphysical problems about man and

the world—seems almost to overdo the purpose of explaining how we should act. A discussion of the main problems of life which the Gita has chosen to consider could be compressed into much smaller compass. Further, within the time that was at their disposal on the eve of the battle, neither could Sri Krishna have elaborated His teachings so much and so long nor have Arjuna demanded such elaborations.]

The almost hysterical fear exhibited throughout the Gita about Prakriti (our senses and body-organism) as though this universal 'mother' of all beings were an abominable enemy instead of being (as she is) a benevolent nurse rearing us into full entities, seems to be quite out of place and philosophically in bad taste. We could never have come into existence but for Prakriti ; we can never gain knowledge but for experiences within it ; and shall never attain our goal of Mukti (or Independence) but by becoming masters of our own 'prakriti-space' through such knowledge. How then can we be afraid of Prakriti's workings or of the pains of failures arising out of our mal-adaptations ? Only he who looks on the whole world as his great Friend and who in consequence can be no enemy to any being, can realise the truth of the great Upanishadic saying, "The knower of Brahman has no fear from anywhere." It is fear that is at the basis of all human miseries ; and it cannot be got over so long as we postulate an 'other' like Prakriti as 'opposed' to us.

11. The yogin, for the sake of self-purification, avoids attachment while performing actions only by the body, manas, buddhi and the senses.

He understands himself as the pure—experiencing—Purusha, as distinct from these Prakritic factors.

12. The yukta, having resigned the fruit of actions, attains the peace that is beyond desires; whereas the a-yukta being attached to the results of desires gets bound.
13. The self-controlled one, having resigned all actions by detachment, remains in peace. In the nine-gated city (*i.e.*, the body) of his, the yukta neither does nor causes anything to be done.
14. The Lord of the world did not bring into existence either actorship or actions or the union with the fruit of action. It is all the work of nature (*Svabhava*).

It may be, because of such a view of Prakriti's agency in the world, that the later Sankhya and Buddhism ignored an Iswara. Hence these two systems are looked on as atheistic.

15. The Lord does not assign to any one either sin or merit. It is due to ignorance (born of confusion between oneself and Prakriti and of the 'resulting' attachment) that beings are deluded, their intelligence being enveloped (obscured) by the lack of knowledge, (and fall into sin).

This is a better theory of sin than the one suggested in Chapter III. 37—41.

16. When this Ajnana (*absence of gnosis*) is destroyed by the Jnana of the Pure Self then in

him rises Jnana shining like the sun and reveals the Supreme beyond.

17. Those who know *That* (the Supreme that is beyond the 'phenomenal' appearance-world) have *That* as their Self, are established in *That* and are solely devoted to *That*, have their sins (defects of mortality, etc.) destroyed by such knowledge. They go (to *That*) whence there is no return (to re-birth).

This is the so-called union with Brahman (*Tat*) ; it is not any theological heaven presided over by a personal God. It is what the Vedantin regards as the ultimate Goal of man. It must be the same as the Buddhist Nirvana and the Sankhyan Kaivalya since these three schools of thought have a metaphysic of Reality that is at bottom identical. This state is described as Brahma-Nirvana in II. 72 and also in this chapter at 24. It is also the 'abode of the Lord' (Sri Krishna) (VIII. 21). That 'state of being,' however, cannot be a 'nothingness' such as some later Vedantins and some Buddhists make it out to be, but a variety of noumenal existence of which we can form no adequate idea by our phenomenal intelligence. What disappears for good is the phenomenal, personal and prakritic pseudo-ego that makes its appearance periodically at every new birth as the karma-determined entity. What abides is the Real Ego as the individual Jiva or Self, which in some transcendental manner is at-one with the One Supreme Life of all (Brahman or Kshetrajna), remaining as Its eternal reflection. What stands as its permanent 'mode of being' is at present not known to us. It may be that it is from that level that the so-called 'avatars' 'descend'

at critical times on to the earth,—avatars such as Sri Krishna describes Himself to be. Such ‘liberated souls’ (who in some metaphysical way are ‘*ONE only*’ at that level) when they come down into humanity become known as the incarnations of God (or God-head) and for our practical purposes are God Himself. There is no God that we can philosophically justify, other than such beings who are also metaphysically One Being.

18. The wise one regards with an equal eye all beings whether they be learned and humble Brahmins, or cows or elephants or dogs\* or even out-castes.
19. Even (while living) here on earth, the phenomenal appearance of things (*sarga*) is overcome by those whose mind is in equipoise. Brahman is flawless and the same (to all) and therefore they (the wise) abide in Brahman.

These verses 16 to 19 and the following ones seem to refer to what is known as the Jivan-mukta state of the Jnani who has (intellectually anyway) realised the unity of Brahman while alive on earth. After death he is supposed to enter into Brahman. The conception that the *realisation* of Brahman should mean *remaining as an eternal entity* on which death cannot lay its hands seems to be foreign to those Vedantins who believe in the state of Jivan-mukta as a sort of intermediate stage, to end ultimately in Videha-mukti.

20. Not exulting when something pleasing happens nor cast down by the displeasing, the wise-

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\* Probably these are figurative expressions for ‘types’ of men.

person of firm understanding, who is not confused, and who realises Brahman, is established in Brahman.

21. He whose Self is detached from external contacts and (thus) obtains the Joy of Self, being united in his Self with Brahman, possesses imperishable bliss.
22. Those pleasures which are due to contacts alone (*i.e.*, sense-pleasures) are really sources of pain. They are inconstant, with beginnings and endings. The wise man takes no delight in them.

Plato long ago stated that our pleasures were all due to the satisfaction of our animal wants. They are thus 'negative.' Positive pleasure is unknown to our nature. The pleasures of pure art and of a holy life are perhaps the only approximations to pure positive bliss that man can experience. In a commercial type of civilization such as we have now, even such pleasure becomes sophisticated. We idealise pure pleasure as belonging to a heavenly state where we are said to enjoy existence without any want! Where we have spontaneous self-expression out of the fullness of our heart, with no expectation of a reward from outside, we seem to have a touch of such positive joy. It consists in the bliss of freedom and fullness of life (with no want whatsoever) that is far above the animal level and that only a yogi or sage is said to experience.

23. He who is able to stand against the forces of Kama and Krodha, even before he throws off the mortal coil, is the person who is really happy and self-united (*yukta*).

24. He whose happiness is within himself (i.e., not dependent on external contingencies), whose delight is within, who is enlightened within, is the yogi possessed of Brahman. He attains Brahma-nirvana.
25. The rishis (sage-seers) attain such Brahma-nirvana, their sins (karmic bonds) destroyed, the dualism of 'opposites' transcended and with their selves under control, being intent on the good of all beings.
26. Such Brahma-nirvana (the cessation of all suffering that pertains to the personal phenomenal Self by the attainment of Unity with Brahman-Atman) becomes directly experienced by those who know the Self, who are free from Kama and Krodha (desire and anger), whose minds are controlled and whose animal nature is subdued.

Next, in 27 and 28, a variety of yoga discipline is abruptly introduced which probably indicates the practices of 'yathis' which might have been current in the author's time and which he was interested in incorporating in this section.

- 27—28. Excluding all external contacts (by a variety of concentration, as in the Patanjali yoga-cult), fixing the gaze between the eyebrows, his in-breathing and out-breathing being balanced and moving within the nostrils, with the senses, the mind and the buddhi kept under control (in stillness), intent on liberation, having turned away

'Tyaga, Yukta, etc., so quickly change chameleon-like and are so loosely employed that it is difficult to gain a definite idea as to what the author meant. We should think that the various expressions used were those of different schools of thought current in the author's time which he wanted to incorporate into his 'symposium' as best he could. Yet they all seem to have the same meaning.

2. What is called 'Sanyasa,' know it to be 'Yoga.'

One who has not renounced 'sankalpa' (plan-making motive for personal gain) does not become a Yogi (one who knows how to act without being bound thereby).

Here the sanyasa of sankalpa is said to lead to yoga ; it thus consists in renouncing attachment to the fruit of action.

3. For the sage (muni) aspiring to yoga, karma (action) becomes the means. For the sage who has attained yoga, shamah (cessation of activity ?) is said to be the means.

Here is a change in the meaning of the terms, yoga and sanyasa, which is at variance with the idea of their identity indicated in verse 2. There is a needless confusion introduced here by speaking of karma as the means to yoga, whereas in the preceding verse it is the giving up of sankalpa that makes a yogi ! The 'means' and 'results' seem to be jumbled up by such loose use of the terms. We also do not know how 'shamah' (renunciation or cessation) is possible at all.

4. When one is not attached to the objects of the senses or to actions, when no sankalpas are

## CHAPTER VI

### YOGA OF THE SELF

Sri Krishna begins this chapter with a definition of Sanyasa, as if He thought to give here an answer to Arjuna's question on the subject which he put at the beginning of the last chapter.

1. He who performs an action that is enjoined (like the *nitya-karma* of the Vedic religion) without attachment to its fruit is the true Sanyasi and Yogi ; not he who (merely) gives up the (sacrificial) fire and the ritual.

Here 'Sanyasi' and 'Yogi' are used as alike in significance. It is also implied that 'sanyasa' as an asrama (a stage of life, the last of the four traditional stages in a Brahmana's life) has to do with the giving up of the family life where a family sacrificial fire and a daily ritual are kept up as the enjoined duties of a grihasta or family-man, as his *nitya-karma*, daily religious duty. To give up these duties externally seems to be of no importance, according to this verse. To be unattached to their results is of greater consequence—even when one performs them.

In the next verse a clear declaration is made of the identity between Sanyasa and Yoga, similar to the oneness of Sankhya and Yoga, declared at IV. 4—5 ; yet the author tries to make out some differences which to us appear as more confusing than clarifying the question at issue. The terms used, such as Sanyasa, Yoga,

mental doctrine of the Gita. It is thus that Karma is to be considered as 'means' to yoga—if verse 3 should be given any contextual meaning. Complete renunciation of action (secular duties) is positively discouraged in the Gita.

5. The self (the phenomenal personality) is to be elevated by the Self (the Higher and Universal Self, the reflection of the Cosmic Brahman-Atman in the individual). Let not any one depress (or ill-treat) himself. The Self is the friend of the self, as also its foe.

One attains to "yoga-siddhi" when an at-one-ment is effected with the universal Atman by transcending the limitations of the personal consciousness, "the father and the son becoming one." The pettiness and exclusiveness of our personality should be renounced. Yet it is clearly stated in the verse that the renunciations should not be effected by repressions, self-tortures and other forms of self-inflicted punishments,—which seem to rest on the assumption that the mortification of the flesh such as some fanatical ascetics practise conduces to the glorification of the spirit. The personal self should be regarded with 'parental love' as the means to at-one-ment with the universal Brahman. The Great Self as reflected in each individual is thus the friend of the personal self. If the personal self remains uncurbed and is allowed to run riot with its animal impulses, then the higher Self seems to stand 'opposed' to it as a foe—its 'ideals' of universality standing in contrast to the petty cravings and desires of the lower self, i.e., it is to the lower self that the Higher Self appears as a foe, as the next verse explains.

entertained, then one is said to be a *yoga-arudha*.

What this 'yoga-arudha' does next is not stated. Would he dissolve himself into his 'original nothingness'? We do not seem to be any the wiser for this knowledge. Further, how is this attitude of unattachment different from the Karma-yoga or Buddhi-yoga explained earlier in the Gita? If not different, what is the value of this section of the Gita? The Yogi and the Sanyasi were declared to be the same sort of individual, at the beginning of this chapter. In the light of verses 3 and 4, are we to take it that the author means that the Yogi does actions but with non-attachment and that the Sanyasi does not act at all? How can even a Sanyasi live without being active, and to what purpose? Does the author mean to suggest that a Yogi remains as a grihasta and a Sanyasi gives up that asrama? These verses 3—4 seem to suggest some interference with the text by some unknown hand. From verse 5 on we seem to revert to the ideas expounded in the first two verses of the chapter—though the matter is the same old topic of non-attachment in action. Verses 3 and 4 seem to be the interpolations of some advocate of the Sanyasa asrama (to which the Gita in the main gives no support).

A variety of yoga discipline, (somewhat like that of the Patanjali school), to bring about self-control and stabilise the mind is described from the next verse onwards. The main teaching about action is the same as the Karma-yoga of non-attachment explained earlier, and not any renunciation of action itself (Sanyasa). Action without any personal attachment is the funda-

and vijnana (the synthetic and the analytic types of understanding the world, that we noted earlier), is firm and has subdued his senses. To him a lump of earth, a stone and gold are the same.

9. He excels by his equable mind (balancedness and absence of prejudices), be he situated among lovers, friends, foes or those who are indifferent to him, among relations or strangers, saints or sinners.

Next, from 10 to 32 directions for self-discipline and mind-control (so as to be a harmonised individual or yukta) are given,—apparently in order that the ideal indicated in verses 6 to 9 may be attained.

10. The Yogi, seated in a secluded place should constantly strive for self-discipline, remaining alone, with his thoughts under control, free from desires and covetousness.
11. He should occupy a cleanly place with a fixed seat of his own, neither too highly placed nor too low, made up of cloth, the skin of an antelope and kusa grass spread one over another.
12. There with the mind centred (on the Self) with his thoughts and senses under control, well-seated, he should practise yoga for self-purification.

These directions seem to be some of the traditional practices which the author was incorporating into the 'Gita, so as to make room in his work for all the systems he knew.

6. The Self is friend where the self is under Its control (in other words, is conquered). But the unsubdued self (literally the not-self or the prakritic personality) makes a foe of the Self. (That is, the personal or the phenomenal self behaves as the enemy of the Self).

So long as the animal nature is strong in a person, the value of the higher Self or Ego is not recognised by him. He regards 'ideals' with scorn. When these ideals are rightly valued, the lower impulses give way, having been conquered or subdued, and the man thus is a friend of the true Self. This is also the main import of the Sankhyan Viveka of Chapter II.

7. With the personal self that is won over, (that, in other words, does not act under sense impulses or desires, but under the ideals of the higher life like a Karma-yogi) the Supreme Self (Brahman-Atman as reflected in the individual) is ever in union (in harmony, as a friend); the self (thus in union with the Supreme One) is at peace in 'heat and cold,' 'pleasure and pain' as well as in 'honour and dishonour.'

Such is the peace and the blessedness of the person who has touched the consciousness of the Universal, transcending the limitations of the Prakritic or phenomenal self.

8. The yogi (one who is striving to be united to the Universal Atman) is said to be Yukta (Self-harmonised) when he is content with jnana

its necessary condition would seem to be an innovation of later times (arising out of an ascetic bias) and is accidental and not essential. It may have been due to a false analogy between the Brahmacharya asrama (the life of study of the sacred scriptures) and the quest of Brahman by the Yogi, that it is found advocated in yoga-discipline also.

15. The Yogi, thus collected in mind and ever engaged in self-control, attains the highest peace of Nirvana which abides in Me.
16. Yoga is not for one who overeats or abstains altogether from eating ; or for one who sleeps too much or keeps awake too long.

A 'golden mean' is next suggested :

17. Yoga which destroys all sorrow is for one who is moderate in food and play, who is of mild and controlled impulses in action, and whose sleep and wakefulness are within regulated limits.

This indicates that 'Yoga' is for the normal man who is engaged in the usual avocations of life and not the monopoly of the abstainer from the activities of life. Hence a grihasta is as much entitled to practise 'yoga' as any other person. There is also no indication here (in the Gita) that yoga is confined to the Brahmin caste to the exclusion of the rest.

18. When the mind (chitta) so controlled rests in the Self, having no longings (of its own) for desirable objects, the individual is said to be yukta (self-collected and harmonised).

13. Holding the body, head and neck erect (without stooping down) and remaining steady without any movement, looking at the tip of his nose, and not allowing his eyes to wander;
14. With the Self at ease, without fear, and remaining firm in his hold on Brahman, with the mind under control and fixed on the Lord, devoted to Him, the person striving for Yoga should remain composed.

Here the term Brahmachari-vrata should not be interpreted in the narrow popular sense of celibacy or continence. Brahmacharya in this narrow sense is irrelevant here, seeing that this teaching is not only addressed to Arjuna, but is intended for every 'grihasta,' as there is no indication either in the Gita or in the lives of the ancient Upanishadic sages that the house-holder is precluded from endeavouring to attain the knowledge of Brahman. It is even open to doubt if a person who has not known grihasta-life will ever be fit to know Brahman, since this asrama alone represents the 'fullness' of human life. And it may even be that Brahman is realised in the grihasta-life alone. It would be a 'renunciation path' and not 'Karma-yoga' if we insisted on interpreting Brahmacharya as compulsory celibacy, even were it biologically possible. Brahmacharya means only the determined assignment of one's life to the one primary object of knowing Brahman. The term originally meant the first asrama in the life of the Dvija in which the Vedas were studied (Veda being one of the meanings of 'Brahman') after the Upanayana ceremony and before entering the married life. The introduction of celibacy as a means to "Yoga" and as

- 26—28. Whenever the mind, that is unsteady by its nature, wanders away it should be brought back and steadied in the Self and kept under control (without being allowed to wander). To the Yogi whose mind is thus made to rest in peace, the highest bliss belongs; whose rajasic nature (restlessness) is steadied and who is filled with Brahman and is free from defects. The Yogi whose defects are destroyed and who is ever self-controlled easily attains the transcendent blessedness of contact with Brahman.
29. He whose self is harmonised by Yoga looks with an equal eye on all, seeing the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

This last statement represents the consummation of all knowledge according to Vedanta.

With a view to express this attainment in a more concrete form to suit the needs of the concretely-minded and the devotionally inclined, the Lord says :

- 30—32. He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me, by him I can never be missed and he shall not be lost to Me. He who is established in unity and who adores Me as dwelling in all beings, though he is active in every way (that is, as a Karma-yogi carrying on various activities), he ever remains in Me (by a transcendental at-one-ment in the one God-head). He who looks evenly on all by a parity with himself (i.e., regards all beings as equal to himself) whether in joy or sorrow

19. Just as a light protected from the wind shines steadily, so also the self of the Yogi remains steady when the mind is controlled and fixed in the Self.

20—25. When the mind is stabilised by the practice of Yoga and rests in peace, when one is pleased in the Self by the perception of the Self in one's self, when he knows the highest bliss which is experienced by the Buddhi, and which is beyond the senses (including the mind), then he remains firm, and unshaken in the Real. And having attained this state, one knows that there is nothing higher, and is not perturbed by even great sorrow. Know this as the Yoga which frees one from every contact with misery. This yoga must be striven for with firm conviction and unflagging determination. Having expunged without exception all the passions arising from personal aims and controlling by the mind all the senses from all sides, step by step one should strive for quietude by one's own Buddhi with firmness; centering the mind, in the Self, let him not think of anything.

All this description indicates a variety of "Raja yoga" or yoga by mental discipline (on which the system of Patanjali seems to have been based). It is distinct from Hatha yoga and other forms of ascetic endeavours for controlling oneself. Raja yoga is intended as a means to attain self-knowledge by which the consciousness of the Self is next to be gained.

position and getting perplexed in the path towards Brahman ? This doubt of mine You alone can clear ; there is none other who can do that (because the Lord knows the destinies of all beings).

The Lord answers :

40—43. Such an individual is never lost either in this world or in the next life. No righteous man will ever fall down in the path of progress. Having reached the worlds (heavenly regions) of the righteous and remaining there for long periods, the person who failed in yoga takes birth in the house of the pure and virtuous. He may even be born in a family of yogins. But such a birth is more difficult to obtain in this world. There he gets back the qualities of intelligence of his former body and strives again for perfection.

Sojourn in a heaven for such an individual is in accordance with the traditional beliefs. It would seem to be a "waste of time" for a would-be Yogi to so remain in a heaven ; for, he is not an individual who could have craved for celestial pleasures (for which sacrifices are ordained). Further we might be permitted to state (as our opinion) that no such heaven or hell can exist anywhere as a separate region. They are only terms to indicate future life-conditions on the earth itself. The interlude between births must be short, just sufficient to bring about the proper "situation" in which one could be re-born. There can be no time or space consciousness after the body is dead ; at best it can only be a variety of dream consciousness, an entirely

(or pleasure or pain) is considered the perfect Yogi.

Arjuna next asks : (rather it is the author himself, as stating the 'purva-paksha' against the doctrine advocated above, that puts this question into Arjuna's mouth).

33—34. This Yoga which you have described as one to be attained by quietude, I find difficult to maintain on account of (the mind's) restlessness. 'Manas' is ever moving, impetuous, strong and stiff. I consider it hard to control, even as is the wind.

The Lord answers :

35—36. Undoubtedly the mind which is ever moving is difficult to steady ; but it can be brought under control by practice and by dispassionateness. Yoga is hard to attain by one who is not self-controlled. But by one who is self-controlled it is attainable by well-directed effort.

The yoga that is described in this chapter is only a variety of discipline.

Arjuna next asks :

37—39. If a person who possesses earnestness but whose mind wanders away from yoga and who is not self-controlled fails (after effort) to attain perfection in yoga, what happens to him ? Does he get lost like a broken piece of cloud, losing hold on both sides (this life and the next), having had no established

in Him. It should not however be taken as a definite spot in space existing now somewhere far far away beyond the Sun !

46. The Yogi is superior to the ascetics ; he is considered even superior to the Jnanis (used here apparently to refer to those who have only intellectual apprehension of the unity of Brahman and not direct knowledge) ; he is also greater than the doers of (Vedic) karma. Therefore be thou a Yogi.

The comparisons do not seem to be happy ; because, we should understand 'yoga,' in the sense the term is used here, as a *means* to jnana in the real sense, as a *discipline*, and not as an end in itself.

47. Of the yogis (i.e., those who strive to know Brahman) he who is full of faith and adores Me, with his Self resting in Me, is to be considered the most harmonised.

Here the 'Me' which Sri Krishna speaks of must be taken as only a concrete 'substitute,' for purposes of meditation or bhakti, for the impersonal Brahman or God-head.

This chapter is called Adhyatma Yoga, knowledge pertaining to the Self, though it treats more of yoga discipline than of the Self.

subjective state. The Puranic stories of passage into heaven either after death or (worse still) even in the living body must be either fables or allegories. Nor is a heaven or hell needed as a form of Karmic 'recompense.' We have enough opportunities for recompense either in this or in a subsequent life. We cannot justify duplicated rewards and punishments, once here on earth and again in a heaven or hell. We have already noted that the concept of "Heaven" is only an 'idealisation' of what should ultimately be the *fact* realised in a future, on this earth itself. The Gita in this respect retails only the popular notions of heavens and hells and not ideas that are philosophically justifiable. Heavens and hells are only inventions of popular theologies.

44. By the efforts of his previous life, the individual is irresistably drawn (to resume his endeavour). Even wishing to learn Yoga leads one beyond the world (plane) of Sabda-Brahman.

The second line of the verse may mean, more consistently, that the desire to be a Yogi leads one beyond the cult of Vedic ritual.

45. The Yogi, striving with assiduity, purified of all defects and getting perfect by a series of births, reaches the Path that is beyond.

This 'path that is beyond,' so frequently referred to in the Gita, is the mystery that is yet to be understood. It is not itself Mukti but that which leads one to that state where 'to be' is to realise 'eternity.' It is 'ideally' the Abode which the Lord speaks of as His own 'place' (Dharma) where His devotees are united.

ahankara (the principle of individualisation) are the eight elements of My Prakriti.

The first five are the material and the other three are the psychic 'fundamentals' of our psycho-physical constitution. A more elaborate form of the Sankhyan analysis is given at XIII. 5.

5. This (eightfold Prakriti) is the lower (that is, that of forms). Know My other nature, the 'higher' (para), the life principle of all beings (in the cosmos) by which the universe is upheld.

Here is a mention made of the important principle of continuity, of life-consciousness by which the whole world of different elements is conceived as bound into one unity and without which a 'cosmos' would not be possible at all. This very important factor as the synthesising principle of the universe represents, probably, the Pradhana 'Avyakta' of the Sankhyas (which is omitted in the enumeration here). To merely enumerate the discrete factors without co-ordinating them into a unity by the use of a principle of unity within which the variety can have a meaning, a whole in which the parts obtain significance in and through the whole, would be like the attempt to twist the loose sand into a rope. The Gita doctrine, by the postulate of Para Prakriti, does well to get over the metaphysical difficulty of understanding the unity and continuity of the cosmos. The phenomenon of consciousness is also to be looked on as an aspect of Para Prakriti, which is, as well, the source of the manifestations of all forms of 'physical energy.' Whether as life or consciousness or energy, Para Prakriti functions as the principle of unity-continuity by

## CHAPTER VII

### JNANA YOGA

Sri Krishna in this chapter continues the discussion of the topic with which the last one ended, viz., the yogi who seeks in and through Him the highest self-harmony.

1. How, with the mind fixed in Me and taking refuge in Me, one striving for yoga knows Me fully without any uncertainty, learn it from Me.
2. I will declare to you jnana along with vijnana in their completeness; which being understood there is nothing more one needs to know.
3. Only one in a thousand men strives for siddhi (perfection). Of those who thus strive, one may know Me really.

The average man seeks only the satisfaction of desires, his turn of mind being what is called 'pravritti' (outward-directed) and not 'nivritti' (directed inward to the Self).

Next are enumerated the fundamental constituents of the cosmos in its discrete character, both material and psychic, under eight headings. This classification might represent the primitive form of Sankhya before the development of its 24 'categories.'

Thus,

4. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, buddhi and

One eternal seed\* (germ) of all beings.. I am the wisdom of the wise and the splendour of the splendid. I am the vigour of the strong that is devoid of lust and passion ; I am the sex-impulse in all beings that is not against the law (or desire that is not against the moral order). All the modes of things, whether harmonious (satvic), changing (rajasic) or inert (tamasic), issue forth from Me. But I am not in them. They lie within Me. The whole world is deluded by these three modes and knows Me not who am beyond these, the Imperishable One. This Divine Maya of Mine that is difficult to pierce and is characterised by these three modes, those only who reach Me are able to pass through. The evil-doers, the fools, the lowest of men, do not reach Me, their intellect being obscured by Maya, and their nature being asuric (tending to pride and cruelty, as explained at XVI. 4.).

*Maya* is a much misused word. It is generally associated with the theory of 'knowledge' known as Mayavada which the Vedantins of the school of Sankara employ to account for and explain the objective world of multiplicity. According to this school the world of sense perception appearing as a reality by itself is due to an error arising from 'Maya' which is taken as an indescribable and eternal something almost co-eval with

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\* The 'seed' apparently represents the principle of organic continuity described by modern biologists as the undying germ-plasm, cf. X-39 and VII-10.

which the world is conceived as one, whereas the "forms" are discontinuous.

6. Understand that this (Para prakriti) is the source of all beings. I am the cause of the going forth of the whole universe as well as its end.

7. There is nothing whatsoever that is beyond Me. All this world of beings exists strung within Me like so many gems on a string.

Next is given a short list of the Lord's various "excellences" (vibhutis) as the "essences" of things. They constitute the ramifications of His Daivi (Para) Prakriti, as the fundamental qualities of things. If the lower (apara) prakriti represents the (discontinuous) 'matter' of the world, the higher (Para) Prakriti represents their qualitative source. Of course neither by our modern science nor by our ordinary knowledge can we explain how 'qualitative evolution' takes place. From what is stated here of the Para Prakriti we might presume that it contains the secret of the origination of qualities both in the simple elements and in the compounds.

8—15. I (as Para Prakriti) am the taste of the watery element; the light of the luminaries, the sun and the moon; the syllable AUM (Pranava) of the Vedas; the sound of the akasa (ether-space) element; the manliness of men; the fragrance (odour) of the earth (element) and the luminosity of the fire element; the life of all living beings and the austerities of the ascetics. Know Me as the

Subject and the Object being ever-at-one. Brahman is a-dvitiya ; there is no 'other' to It. Our finite mentality, due to our taking only an objective or 'externalist' standpoint of space-time relations, obscures the internal unity of all in Brahman, the 'pravrittic' view preventing the 'nivrittic' insight. With the development of the internal perception of the Spirit, the 'dualism' of matter and spirit vanishes. To know Brahman is to *know* that all is One ; it is to be one, and to experience that the consciousness of otherness (to which we are now subject, as finite beings with merely an external outlook) is not ultimate. There are not two realities, Brahman and Maya. There cannot be two varieties of existence, the real and the unreal (Vide II. 16), absolute non-existence being only a self-contradiction. It is the one manifest Reality that is at once both the life-consciousness or 'subject' and the time-space infinity of extensiveness or 'object.' The limited vision of the finite consciousness blinds us to the fact of the unity of all in Brahman, giving us only partial and piece-meal presentations of what, in truth, is absolutely one. Maya is not a real or an entity beside Brahman ; it is a term to indicate the mode of experiencing reality purely from an external or form aspect of things. To know truly we should know both the *in* and the *out* of any being, both as a living and conscious subject as well as a form-object. Spirit and matter are only two names for the two views of reality, the *intensive* and the *extensive* aspects of all things.\*

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\* The *ultimate* of matter and spirit is the same *Fact* known as Avyakta, whether called Pradhana or Brahman, the difference in names being only indicative of the double nature of its function,—the building of objective forms and the working of the informing life. That is why, as with the concept of Nirguna Brahman, we cannot

Brahman, and affecting all finite jivas. It is due to this 'principle,' they say, that a 'superimposition' on the One Reality of Brahman is made by the ignorant individual jiva, by which there arises the *appearance* of the world of variety as an external reality obscuring the unity of Brahman. Since the attribution of complexity does violence to the absolute unity of Brahman, the appearance of variety is taken as an error, and thus the objective world itself is condemned as an illusion. Such an attempt to *explain* away the objective world will, however, be found to be but another illusion! The Maya-vada when developed to its logical limit will only destroy itself. To support it we have to make many unwarranted assumptions of other 'realities' than Brahman, besides this mysterious Maya, such as (1) a plurality of individual jivas as 'others' to Brahman, (2) subjective notions which these individuals superimpose on Brahman, and their unaccounted source, (3) absence of 'motive' for so superimposing them, (4) the inexplicable uniformity and orderliness in the system of such superimposed ideas making up our physical world-order, etc. To attempt by such devices to explain away plurality for maintaining the unity of Brahman is like driving out by the doorway what we allow in again by the window. We should, on the contrary, try to understand the unity of Brahman without any resort to a theory of the world as an *Illusion* or 'maya,' and also interpret the concept 'Maya' in an intelligible and positive sense. We should not lead ourselves into a metaphysical *impasse*. 'Brahman' is Itself the conception of the unity of both the subjective and the objective aspects of reality without either being in anyway unreal or illusory; It is the idea of both the

under four categories. They are those who are suffering (from the evils of the world), those who seek enlightenment, those who desire the good things of the world and the jnanis (sages). Of these the jnani, ever-harmonised and with single-minded devotion, is the best. He is supremely dear to Me as I am to him. All these (four kinds of worshippers) are noble ; but I hold the sage as verily Myself. He is self-collected and fixed in Me as the highest goal. After many lives, the sage reaches Me holding that Vasudeva is all. Such a sage, the great soul, is a rarity. ('Vasudeva' means here the 'Soul of the world').

20. Those whose intelligence is deluded by 'desires' approach other gods (who are concerned with their fulfilment) by means of the requisite observances, according to their own prakriti (nature).
21. Everyone who wishes with faith to worship any aspect of divinity obtains from Me alone that unwavering faith.

This may be read with verse 11 of Chapter IV.

22. Endowed with the requisite faith, the devotee who worships a particular deity obtains the fulfilment of his desires from him ; but I am the real giver of the fruit.

The minor gods are the agents of Iswara for; the distribution of Karmic fruits.

They cannot be separated without being destroyed at the same time. It is this same fact, later on explained in the Gita, that is indicated by the statement that the whole world is the result of the eternal co-existence of Prakriti and Purusha, or Kshetra and Kshetrajna. Maya is thus seen to be that aspect of Reality which is the basic principle of form-building, externalisation, objectification or space-time manifestation, while Purusha as Iswara would represent the life and consciousness of all beings. Hence Maya is also described as the creative 'power' of the Spirit. The One becomes the Twain, and the Twain become the many in order that the 'Will-to-be-many' may manifest itself as the world.

The truly epistemological and metaphysical value of the concept of Maya is that so long as one does not understand things from the inner unitary point of view, but considers only their external and discontinuous appearance-aspect, one misses knowing how one is rooted in Brahman ; he thus gets affected by the pains and privations of finite life, such as dependence, decay and death, arising from a wrong perspective of reality. For getting over bondage (Karma-bandha) and attaining real freedom there is no ethical precondition other than living up to the ideal of the unity of all in Brahman, nor any other knowledge but that Brahman is both the Life and the Form of every being, animate or inanimate.

#### 16—19. The righteous men who worship Me come

attribute any 'qualities' to that ultimate 'matter' though the quality-bearing material 'elements' have evolved out of it. The realisation by oneself of the fundamental unity of 'spirit' and 'matter' in one's body-organism will thus appear as the one great lesson of all experience-knowledge and the attainment of true freedom or Mukti.

also of the world of gods and of yajna (sacrifice), shall verily know Me even at the time of their death, well harmonised in their minds.

These last two verses are somewhat obscure. They might indicate the highest ideal of knowledge that man is capable of by which he becomes 'divine' in nature, when *decay* and *death* cannot touch him. Unfortunately these verses are not further explained, being suddenly introduced here at the very end of the chapter, and summarily disposed of in three verses in the next chapter as though the mere dictionary meaning of the words could enlighten us ! They may represent an ancient cult or 'vidya' of which we have no tradition now. It is rather curious that there should be a reference in 29, not to a mukti obtainable only *after death*, nor to a cessation of rebirths, but only to *freedom from decay and death*. The omissions are rather suggestive of the forgotten Vidya. Presumably the ideal here on earth is to conquer decay and death when the problem of rebirth disappears of itself. The 'ideal' knowledge being that of Brahman, its 'realisation' can only be in *remaining eternal* in all phases of existence. It must be a pre-mortem achievement and not a "hope" of realisation in the post-mortem state. This aspect of the problem is left out in the next chapter ; instead, we have there a long exposition on to how to die so as not to return—what an ironic contrast between these two 'ideals' of human destiny !

23. But such rewards are finite. They are for those of small understanding. The worshippers of the gods go to them ; and My devotees reach Me.
24. The fools regard Me, the Unmanifest, as though manifested (limited by manifestation). They do not know My Supreme nature, imperishable and unexcelled.

This may be a reference to such unwise men as the Kauravas who took Sri Krishna for a son of Vasudeva of the Yadu clan, a mere man like themselves.

25. Enveloped in My own Yoga-Maya (the power of manifestation) I am not discovered by all and sundry. This foolish world knows Me not as the Un-born and the Un-decaying.
26. I know all beings, past, present and future. But none of them knows Me.
27. By the confusion caused by the pairs of opposites arising from attractions and repulsions, all beings are deluded at their birth.
28. But those of good deeds whose sins are ended, who are liberated from the delusion of dualities, worship Me with firm devotedness.
29. Those who strive, taking refuge in Me, for freedom from age and death, shall know 'That' (Brahman) as well as everything pertaining to the Self (Atman) and Karma in its entirety.
30. Those who know Me as the source of knowledge of the world of elements (or beings), as

4. Adhi-bhuta is the perishable world (of beings existing in time as opposed to eternity). Adhi-daivata is the Purusha (Jiva-Atmas). In this body (of Mine) I am the Adhi-yajna.\*

These 'explanations' of the terms seem almost literal renderings. But when we come to the three terms, Adhyatma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva, (apart from the interpretations given here as having to do with 'a knowledge' of Atma, Bhuta and Daiva), we are reminded of the three varieties of human miseries (tapa-trayas). How such different kinds of connotation arose and when, we do not know. The Gita meanings represent the varieties of true Jnana which one desiring liberation should obtain, (the prefix 'adhi' indicating such interpretation) and are probably more correct than those of the later Sankhya School of thought.

The last item, how one should fasten one's mind on the Lord to reach Him after death, is elaborated in the subsequent verses, while the more important topics indicated by the other terms are left off without any further comment. Considering the shortness of this chapter, we must suppose that there were verses containing more information on these topics which have since been lost.

We fail to see why so much should be made of the moment of death or even of death, when one can easily understand that the 'ideal' of immortality can have no meaning or value if death should be *absolute*. We might as well give up any ideal that speaks of achieving

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\* These two, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajna, seem to refer to the Vedic story of the Sacrifice of the Great Purusha to bring the world into existence at the beginning of 'creation.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE INDESTRUCTIBLE BRAHMAN

Arjuna naturally asks for an elucidation of the new terms introduced :

- 1—2. What is 'That' Brahman; what are Adhyatma and Karma ; and what is it that is called Adhibhuta and what is it that is spoken of as Adhidaiva ? Who in this body is Adhiyajna and how ? How are You to be known by the self-controlled at the time of their leaving the body ?

The question on Adhiyajna seems somewhat to assume the nature of the answer. The prefix 'adhi' means a knowledge pertaining to the term used in relation thereto.

The Lord answers :

3. The Indestructible Supreme (One) is Brahman. 'Swabhava' is Adhyatma (i.e.. knowledge about the Atman or Brahman as Atma, and not of Nature or Prakriti of the Sankhyas). The impulsion by which the birth of beings takes place is known as Karma.

This last remark also shows, as we have noted elsewhere, that Karma primarily is the name for the process of 'Cosmic evolution' in which the individual Jiva's part is only minor and secondary.

7. Hence thinking on Me alone at all times, fight. With manas and buddhi anchored in Me, you shall, without doubt, reach Me.
8. With the mind trained by practice into harmony, and never wandering, one reaches the Supreme Divine Purusha, constantly meditating on Him.
9. One who ever thinks on Him, the Omniscient, the Ancient, the Ruler, more minute than the atom, the Support of all, of Form unimaginable, of the lustre of the Sun and who is beyond darkness ;

These are all Upanishadic expressions applied to Brahman. If the Supreme Purusha be of form unimaginable, how can He be pictured as described in the XIth chapter ? The descriptions given in the Upanishads of Brahman are to be taken only in the 'intensive' sense for purposes of meditation and contemplation, and not as literal characterisations of the One Reality as though it were a *form* in space.

10. At the time of death, with the mind steadied, in devotion fixed, and by the power of yoga establishing one's Prana (or breath) completely betwixt the eyebrows, one goes to this Supreme Purusha Divine.

This indicates the 'dying at will' of the yogi and has no reference to the ordinary man.

11. That which the Veda-knowers speak of as the Eternal, that which the self-controlled devoid of desires enter, that desiring which Brahma-charya is vowed, that state I shall you in brief.

invulnerability against the action of cosmic forces, and freedom from disease, decay and death, if death be certain somewhere and at some time and all things are thrown into the melting pot of dissolution in a 'pralaya,' to begin again a new process with no necessary connection or continuity with the world process that was past—a view similar to the modern astronomical theories of world-formations and world-dissolutions. We, for our part, believe that man is evolving on earth to be a *real immortal* at some future date when death shall ultimately be conquered, and the present 'ideal' of heaven become the 'fact' of the earth hereafter-to-be. In the light of the *ideal expounded* in the 29th verse of the previous chapter, the elaboration in this chapter on death, from verse 5 on, seems to be out of place. There should be no problem of a 'Prayanakala'; its mention here is abrupt and does not accord with the spirit of the other ideas mentioned in the context. To speak of the immortality of an '*abstract self*' (as we have previously noted) would be as pointless as to say that 'Life is not death'!

5. He who departs from the body at the time of death thinking on Me only, certainly reaches My state (or enters My being); there is no doubt of that.

And, generalising the idea :

6. Whosoever leaves the body at the end <sup>of</sup> thinking on any object (or being), that he attains, being in conformity with its nature.

Probably the 'ghosts' that are said to haunt a place do so because of such thoughts of theirs when dying !

These verses might represent a school of thought or Vidya giving directions as to how a yogi should depart this life, which the author wanted to incorporate in the Gita. These directions remind us of Kalidasa's verse about the progeny of Raghu, who left the body at death-time by 'yoga.' The true sage is supposed to die by means of yoga (at his will), consciously by a process of body-prana control, and not like any other animal by natural causes and in a state of unconsciousness. The description in these verses is evidently given in answer to Arjuna's question as to how one should think on the Lord at the time of death in order to reach Him.

14. To him who constantly meditates on Me and not on any other (god) and who is a self-harmonised yogi, I am easy of reach.
15. Having reached Me, these great souls return not to re-births which are full of pain and non-eternal. They gain the supreme perfection.

Apparently this our world is assumed to be one whose lot is unmitigated pain and misery for all time with no prospect of salvation—as though it was specially created for our suffering. An excellent certificate indeed to its Maker from the children of the Earth !

16. The worlds from that of Brahma (the Creator) downwards come and go. But one who reaches Me shall not have to be re-born.
17. They who know say that a Day of Brahma (the Creator) is made up of a thousand yugas (ages); and a Night also is a thousand ages long. Thus they know Day and Night.

The Brahma-charya referred to here may be the vow of physiological celibacy, according to the traditional views, though in our opinion it has no essential relation, nay is positively irrelevant, to Brahma-knowledge. We go further and assert that the knowledge which is so absolutely essential to realise how the Supreme Principle of Life works can never be had by the avowed celibate or the sanyasi, but can be had only by the grihasta. For, this knowledge can come only from experience of the creative process by which a jiva-to-be-born first enters the male parent and forms the seed which next getting deposited in the mother parent evolves the embryonic body, and then enters into the system of the new-born child at its first breathing. Without this knowledge, to say that Brahman is known would be idle. Brahman cannot be known by mere repetitions of the Upanishadic mahavakyas or simple philosophical discriminations, but only by living experience.

12—13. All the gates of the body (the senses by which one's attention goes out) controlled, with the manas steadied in the heart (the Anahata Chakra of the yogins), keeping one's life-breath at the top of the head (the Brahma-randhra), and fixed in Yoga-dharana (concentration); pronouncing (internally) the sacred syllable Aum that is Brahman, and thinking on Me\*, one who leaves the body and departs goes along the Supreme Path. (Cf. 5—7).

\* As the Guru, apparently, as otherwise there is no room for any concrete thought on Sri Krishna as an 'object' of meditation.

it in Its nature as the higher synthesis, as at once the 'subject' and the 'object' of Reality. The Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras support this view of 'Brahman' as the One Origin of both the subjective and the objective worlds.

21. That Supreme Goal is also known (to the wise) as the Unmanifest (Avyakta), the Eternal, reaching which there is no return. That is My Supreme Abode.
22. He, the Supreme Purusha, is accessible by un-divided devotion. In Him all beings dwell and by Him all this is pervaded.

He is the Deity or the God-head that is both transcendent and immanent, and for purposes of Bhakti may be regarded as God, as here indicated. He must be conceived of as above the Trinity of popular theology and remains metaphysically as the nameless One.

Next we have a description of the traditional views about the two paths, the Devayana and the Pitriyana, of the Vedas and the Upanishads,—which has also to find a place in the Gita symposium ! These two 'paths' may be only allegorical in significance.

23. That time of departure which if the yogi (not the ordinary person) takes, he returns not (to re-birth) and also that time which if he takes, he does return, I tell you.
24. Fire, light, day-time, the bright fortnight and the six months of the Northern path (of the Sun), these mark the departure of the knowers of Brahman who go to Brahman.

These Days and Nights are the traditional periods of 'activity' and 'rest' of the 'cycles-theory' of the world-process.

18. From the Avyakta (the latent condition of cosmic Prakriti) all the Vyaktas (manifest forms) issue forth at the Dawn of Day. When the Night comes they merge back into the self-same Avyakta.

These 'discontinuous' appearances and disappearances of worlds have also 'correspondences' in the 'micro-cosmic' organic forms, as, for example, in waking and sleeping and other organic activities such as breathing, the beating of the heart, etc.

19. This mass of beings issuing repeatedly at every Dawn gets dissolved at the coming of the Night, as though impelled by a necessity.

This is taken as an eternal (beginningless and endless) fact of Nature. Hence as a way out of this whirlpool it is said,

20. Therefore there truly exists, beyond this latent state of Avyakta (Prakriti's), another Avyakta, Eternal, which in the dissolution (as in a melting pot) of all beings, is not (Itself) destroyed.\*

But there will be a metaphysical impasse if such an absolute dualism be postulated at the Origin. We are, therefore, bound to assume that the Brahmic Avyakta while transcending the Prakritic Avyakta yet includes

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\* The Upanishadic Brahman as distinguished from Prakriti is also called Avyakta.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ROYAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE ROYAL MYSTERY

The Lord continues :

1. To you who are free from jealousy I now declare this, the greatest secret (of) knowledge that unifies, along with the knowledge that discriminates, understanding which you shall be freed from evil.
2. This is the kingly wisdom and kingly secret which is the supreme purifier ; it is what can be directly understood (that is, without any mediation), righteous, easy to act on and imperishable.
3. Those who are without faith in this Dharma (law of righteousness) do not reach Me but return to the path of mortal life-cycles.
4. By Me who am of unmanifest character all this world is permeated. All beings are rooted in Me, but not I in them.
5. Yet, beings are not (directly) based in Me. Behold My sovereign Yoga ! The support of all beings but not rooted in them, I am the *Idea* of the Universe.

The apparent contradiction between the statements in 4 and 5 regarding the 'relation' between 'beings' and the Lord, is to be explained on the view that

They are said to pierce the disc of the Sun and reach Brahma-loka !

25. Smoke, night, the dark fortnight and the six months of the Southern course of the Sun, these mark the departure of the yogi (not yet perfected) who reaches the light of the Moon (the pitri-loka or the lunar world) and returns (to re-birth).

The Pitris are either the 'ancestral gods' who allocate births to the incarnating jivas and reside in Chandra-loka, or are our dead ancestors themselves who are supposed to reach the 'world of the Moon' and remain there till the time of their re-birth.

26. Light and Darkness, these are taken as the two eternal paths of the world. By one he goes who returns not; by the other he who returns.

27. Knowing these two ways, the yogi does not get confused. Therefore at all times be united in yoga.

The reason, as already noted, is that the *yogi* can choose his time of departure,—as for instance in the case of Bhishma.

28. Whatever merit is found in the Vedas, sacrifices, austerities and gifts, that the yogi surpasses by learning what has here been declared and goes to the Supreme and the Primary abode (of the Great Purusha).

affected within them, and without any attachment (to results).

This illustrates the attitude of a perfect Karma Yogi ; Iswara Himself being the 'ideal' of activity without any attachment in the cosmos.

10. Under My supervision Prakriti brings forth the moving and the unmoving (beings); by virtue of this (the Lord's supervision) the world-process goes on.

That is, the world-process comes to a stand-still in a laya-condition, if the Lord's supervision is withdrawn.

11. Fools (Duryodhana and others like him) disregard Me in My human embodiedness, being unaware of My supreme nature as the Lord of beings ;

12. Given to empty hopes, vain actions and with a confused intelligence, they are senseless, being addicted to the deluding prakriti of the rakshasic (cruel) and asuric (egoistic) qualities (that is, the Rajasic and the Tamasic modes of Prakriti).

13. But the great-souled (of men), partaking of My divine nature, adore Me with undivided mind, knowing Me as the imperishable Origin of beings.

14. They ever praise Me and strive with steadfast determination (for self-harmonisation). They worship Me, ever harmonised, and prostrate before Me in devotion.

15. There are also others who worship Me by the yajna of knowledge (single-minded endeav-

'beings' are really 'Prakriti's' handiwork made under the influence of the 'contemplation' or 'idea' of the Lord (in whom *esse* is *percipi*) as the superintending Deity. Hence He is known also as the eternal 'sakshi' (witness) of the world. Thus it is said :

6. As the mighty air penetrating into everything is ever established in the ether-space (akasa), so also all beings are to be understood as established in Me.

This simile better represents Prakriti in its Avyakta aspect than Iswara whose influence is only 'ideal' !

7. All beings re-enter My Prakriti, (the unmanifest, Avyakta, of Chap. VIII. 18—20) at the (time of) dissolution of a Kalpa.' At the beginning of a (new) Kalpa I set Them out.

These alternating commencements and dissolutions of the universes (kalpas) are like the Days and Nights of Brahma, and are the workings of Prakriti by the operation of the 'laws of causation.' Iswara by His superintending and guiding 'Idea' which stands as a 'teleological principle' over the 'material' operations of Prakriti without itself being any 'material' part of the cosmos, remains unaffected by these processes.

8. Resting on My Prakriti, I send forth all these beings every time (i.e., Myself remaining within, undrawn), as though (they are sent out) by the force of Prakriti (i.e., due to Karma) to appear manifest as if helplessly.

9. These activities (which are really of Prakriti's) do not bind Me who am seated as one un-

20. The learned in the three Vedas, the drinkers of 'Soma' (sacrificial juice) who are purified of their sins, having performed sacrifices, desire the way to heaven ; they, ascending the pure world of the Ruler of the gods, enjoy there (in heaven) the heavenly joys.
21. Having enjoyed (the pleasures) of the vast heavenly regions, their merit (getting) exhausted, they come back (are reborn) into this world of death. Following the laws of the three Vedas, they obtain what comes and goes (that is, the transitory) desiring (only) desirable objects.
22. (But) as for those who adore Me alone, thinking of none other, who are ever harmonised, I look to their welfare.
23. Even those devotees who worship other gods with faith, they also worship Me (indirectly), though in a manner contrary to the ancient rules.
24. I am verily the enjoyer of all forms of sacrifice (worship) and their Lord. But they (those referred to in the previous verse) know Me not in essence and hence fall (to re-births).
25. Those who are devoted to the (minor) gods go to them. Those who worship the 'pitris' go to them. The worshippers of the elemental spirits go to the elemental spirits. But My worshippers come unto Me.
26. He who offers with devotion to Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, even that <sup>is</sup> accepted

vour to know), as the One and the many, the All-seeing.

This seems to refer to the yogi's effort to gain both an 'intensive' and 'extensive' knowledge of Brahman as the one fundamental Reality—as the ideal knowledge.

16. I am the (sacrificial) rite and the act of sacrifice. I am the offering to the sacred fire as well as the sacred herb. I am the sacred hymn (mantra) and the clarified butter. I am the sacred fire and the burnt offering.

This is similar to the idea in IV. 24, indicative of the allegorical interpretation of the items of a sacrifice, as all Brahman, probably intended to exalt the cult of sacrifices. It bears no relation in the context to the preceding or the succeeding verse.

17. I am the Father of the Universe, the Mother, the Support and the Grandsire; I am what should be known, the Pure, the (mystic) Aum and the (three Vedas) Rik, Sama and Yajus.

Only three of the Vedas are recognised as primary, Atharva, the fourth, being taken as a later compilation and containing many passages from the other three.

18. I am the Way (or the Goal), the consort, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the friend, the origin, the dissolution, the foundation (or place), the home and the seed imperishable.

19. I heat (the world) and also give and withhold the rain. I am deathlessness as well as death; being and non-being am I.

individual or sect. May we say that the Gita, like Buddhism, is a revolt against Vedic orthodoxy and ritualism ?

33. How much more easily then should holy Brahmins and devoted kingly sages (who are the classes privileged to learn the sacred doctrines) ? Having got into this transient world of misery, worship Me (to get out of it).

That existence here is misery is again asserted (dogmatically) in this verse. Such is the general tenor of the Hindu and the Buddhist attitude to life here on earth. In a sense all religions which seek another world of happiness, a heaven after death, look on existence here as something that must be escaped from. Apparently they assume that the earth and our sojourn thereon are due to some error somewhere at the beginning of things, and that this state of things is irremediable except probably by a dissolution. Those who do not wish to throw the blame on the Creator invent various explanations as to why life here is misery or even why it should be what it is. We get involved in metaphysical dilemmas so long as we postulate that there is another place beyond the earth where we should go to find peace and happiness after death and which is also taken as representing our original home. If there were such a place we could as well have remained there from the beginning and this world need not have come into being ! To condemn this world as one of death and misery is to condemn the Origin which brought this into existence. To avoid this awkward conclusion we must take a different view and consider that death and misery are only passing phases ; and like an unfinished

a token of devotion from the individual who strives (to reach Me).

27. Whatever you do, or eat, or sacrifice or give as a gift, whatever you do as austerity (tapas), do that as an offering to Me.
28. You will be freed from the bondage of Karma thereby, whether that Karma be good or bad in results. Harmonised in the Self by the yoga of renunciation, you will be freed and reach Me.
29. I am impartial to all beings. I neither hate or favour any. Those who worship Me with devotion dwell in Me and I in them.
30. Even if the most sinful should worship Me and none else, he should be considered virtuous since his resolve is right.
31. Speedily he becomes righteous-minded and attains permanent peace. Know with certainty that none of My devotees shall ever be lost.
32. Those who take refuge in Me, though born of sin, though they be women, Vaisyas or even Sudras, they also go along the highest path.

This is the catholicity of the Gita teaching which appeals to the whole of humanity irrespective of any distinctions of caste, creed or sex, or even race. The ancient Hindu rules prohibit Veda study and Vedantic life to all except Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The Gita over-rules these distinctions. (Cf. IV. 11). The 'God' of the Gita and the way to Him are no monopoly of any

## CHAPTER X

### THE VIBHUTIS OF THE LORD

Herein we find further amplification and illustration of the Lord's glory and excellence, i.e., His 'Vibhuti.'

1. Hear Me again, My supreme word which I declare desiring your welfare, because you are well beloved of Me.
2. The host of the (minor) gods or the Great Rishis know not My power of expansion (into the manifest world); for I am the First (or Origin) of the gods and also of the Rishis.

It means that the Lord can only be revealed by Himself.

3. He who understands Me as the unborn, Unoriginated (by another) and as the Great Lord of the World and who, amidst mortals, is undeluded, is freed from all sin.
- 4—5. Wisdom, knowledge, non-delusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, peace, pleasure, pain, being and non-being, fear and fearlessness; harmlessness, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame and ill-fame, are the various qualities of beings, springing forth from Me.

work of art, the present nature of our existence represents but imperfectly what it is ultimately destined to be. There is no need to duplicate existence and speak of different worlds such as heavens and hells along with the earth. We have already referred elsewhere to the hope that this earth itself might become in 'fact' the heaven of which we have all along been accustomed to speak. The earth should be looked upon as destined to be the abode of a new race of immortal beings at the allotted time. Buddhistic, Vedantic, Sankhyan and other other-worldly views of religions will ultimately disappear when the new order is established—the new Kalpa of Eternity. We should not forget that 'existence' can be *one only*; and it is in such existence (which should also be continuous) that our evolution should find its consummation. We should not assume that the original plan behind evolution has already worked out its end; we are only mid-way, as it were, at the point wherefrom a new impulse that will take it to its destined goal begins to work. When that goal is achieved none of the defects of the earth-life, that now seem to be inescapable, will remain.

As His final counsel the Lord says :

34. Let your mind be fixed on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice unto Me, prostrate in worship before Me. You will certainly reach Me, harmonised in the Self and looking on Me as the Supreme Goal.

Thus ends this Royal secret and Royal science (about the path to reach the Supreme, without distinctions of caste, sex, etc.). This verse prepares us for the yoga of Bhakti described in Chap. XII.

Purusha Divine, the First of Gods, Unborn and Supreme, all the Rishis acclaim You ; so also do the divine Rishi Narada, so Asita, Devala and Vyasa. You Yourself declare so to me now.

14. All this I believe true that You have declared to Me. Your manifest nature neither the gods nor the demons comprehend.
15. By Yourself You know Yourself, Source of beings, Lord of beings, God of gods, Ruler of the world.
16. Be pleased to tell Me without reserve the divine glories of Your Self by which pervading all these worlds, You remain (in them, Yourself untainted).
17. How am I to comprehend You, O Yogin, ever meditating on You ? In what various aspects are You to be meditated upon by me ?
18. Let me be again told by You in detail about Your yoga and excellences. There is no satiety to me in listening to Your nectar-like discourse.

This is the ecstatic response of Arjuna to the teaching of the Lord in the preceding discourses. It prepares him for the 'phenomenal appearance'—which he wished to 'see'—of the excellences of the Lord in His aspect of pervading the whole world, and which is the central theme of the next chapter.

'The Lord says :

19. Right glad am I to declare to you My divine

6. The seven Maha (Great) Rishis, the ancients Four\* and also the Manus are mind-born and of My nature, out of whom this world of beings (was born).
7. One who understands in essence the sovereignty and yoga of Mine becomes harmonised by unfaltering yoga (Bhakti) without any doubt.
8. I am the Origin of all and in Me all moves. The wise understanding Me thus adore Me whole-heartedly.
9. With their minds fixed on Me, their life in Me rooted, enlightening one another by discourses about Me, (conversing about Me) they are content and happy.

This indicates the mode of life of a 'Bhakta.'

10. On them, ever harmonious and adoring Me with devotion, I bestow Buddhi yoga, (Cf. Ch. II) by which they reach Me.

This shows the importance of Buddhi yoga as the one means of life by 'Viveka' by which one frees oneself from karmic bondage.

11. Out of compassion for them, I destroy the darkness of their ignorance by the light of wisdom, establishing Myself in their nature.

Arjuna here says :

- 12—13. Supreme Brahman, supreme Abode and the supremely Pure are You. As the Eternal

\* Probably Kumaras, since they are not mentioned elsewhere in the list.

the japa-yajna (muttering of sacred words),  
and of immovable things the Himalayas;

26. Asvattha (the sacred fig-tree) among the trees,  
Narada of the Divine Rishis, Chitraradha of  
the Gandharvas, and Kapila-muni of the  
Siddhas;
27. Know Me as Uchchaisravas (Indra's horse)  
born of the ocean of nectar, among horses,  
and Airavata (Indra's elephant) among lordly  
elephants, and of men the king;
28. Of weapons I am the thunderbolt (Indra's  
weapon) and of cows Kamadhuk (Vasishta's  
cow); of progenitors I am Kandarpa (the  
god of Love and Vishnu's son) and Vasuki of  
serpents.
29. Ananta of the Nagas, Varuna of sea-dwellers,  
Aryaman of the Pitrис, and Yama of controllers  
(of justice and law);
30. I am Prahlada of the Daitya race, of reckoners.  
I am Time, of the beasts their lord, the lion,  
and Vainateya (the divine eagle, the vehicle  
of Vishnu) of the birds;
31. Of Purifiers I am the wind, Rama of the  
archers, Makara of the sea-monsters, and of  
streams the Ganges;
32. Of creations I am the beginning and the ending  
and also the middle; of all knowledge, the  
knowledge of the Self and the speech of  
orators;



41. Whatever is glorious, powerful, beautiful or good, know that as having originated in Me, from a ray of Myself (as the Lord of Daivi Prakriti).

This means that all true values are positive qualities that proceed from the Lord. They are the 'virtues' of things. What we have as 'evil' or 'vice' is to be understood as only indicative of a *lack of virtue*, as *negative* and not positive, or as virtues in the making. The real is the 'positive'; and everything in the world is tending to be positive in the course of its evolution.

42. But of what use is knowledge of these details to you? Having occupied this whole universe with one ray (or fragment) of Myself I ever am.

The remark here of the Lord Himself shows that this chapter had no bearing on Arjuna's problem or on the main Gita discourses. It is apparently intended by the author to prepare Arjuna's mind for the 'scene' of the next chapter.

33. A of the letters, the dvandva among the samasas (compounds of words); I am the infinite Time and the support of all, facing everywhere;
34. I am the all-devouring death and the origin of all things yet to be; fame, prosperity, speech among feminine (qualities) as also memory, intelligence, fortitude and forgiveness;
35. The great Saman of the Sama Hymns and Gayatri of the poetic metres; of the months the Margasirsha and of the seasons the flowery (season);
36. The game of the gambler and the splendour of those who possess splendour; victory, determination and the vigour of the vigorous am I;
37. I am the son of Vasudeva of the Vrishni clan and Arjuna of the Pandavas; Vyasa I am of the Munis and Usanas of the poets;
38. The rod of justice and the policy of those who wish to conquer; the silence of those who keep secrets and the knowledge of the knowers;
39. Whatever is the seed of all beings, that am I; there is nought moving or unmoving that can exist without Me;
40. There can be no end to My divine excellences.\* What has been given here is only by way of illustration.

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\* All the above Vibhutis are considered as aspects of the Lord's divine Prakriti.

1—4. The explanation You have given, out of compassion for me, about the supreme secrets concerning the Self, has cleared my confusion. The origin and destiny of beings I have heard recounted in detail, as well as Your imperishable glory. Even as You described Your Self, in that Form of Lordship I wish to have a 'sight' of You. If You think that it can be seen by me, then show me Your Imperishable Self.

The request of Arjuna's in 3 and 4 takes our breath away by its utter lack of philosophic appreciation of what the Self is described to be in the Gita. We wonder how this chapter could have found a place in this work. Can it be that it is an interpolation introduced by one whose knowledge of the Upanishadic Atman was entirely wrong? Chapter XIII of the Gita itself (representing the essence of the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman-Atman) clearly shows the impossibility of 'picturing' the Self as a *form*. If that chapter is to be accepted, this chapter deserves to be deleted. The all-embracing characteristics of Brahman as explained in Chapter XIII are *intensive*, and not *extensive* or such as to be represented by any form, as this chapter attempts to represent them. The external picture of the world of forms exhibits only discontinuity. The continuity and unity of the Universe (as Brahman) is realised as *direct* knowledge by the soul and cannot be seen like a picture. How far removed is such direct and intensive knowledge of the Self from the picture of Visvarupa described here, any one with a philosophic turn of mind can easily understand. There can be no room for any 'otherness' in the experience of *direct* perception.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FORM UNIVERSAL

This chapter in the Gita is made much of by certain Vaishnava enthusiasts as glorifying their favorite Deity; and even grotesque pictures *literally* representing the 'visvarupa-darsana' are painted on temple walls and reproduced in certain Gita publications! However, we should judge for ourselves without any bias whether the form 'visvarupa' attributed to Sri Krishna by the poet does justice in any way to the teaching that the Gita purports to give us as an Upanishad. The term Visvarupa is itself a self-contradiction philosophically considered. And the form that is revealed is not either pleasing or edifying in any theological sense so as to be appropriately ascribed to what we conceive of as the Deity. How can the Universal Deity as *Spirit* that is intensively all-pervading be pictured as a *form in space*? Both Arjuna's request and the Lord's display appear quite abrupt and inconsistent, considering the doctrines earlier taught in the Gita itself, about Brahman as the One Great Spirit. Sri Krishna had nowhere mentioned that He was the Supreme One whose form could be *seen*, but had only described Himself as the One Self residing in all beings and expressing Himself by various *attributes* (*vibhutis*) originating from Him. Arjuna's question, therefore, appears to be based on an entire misunderstanding of the spirit of Sri Krishna's exposition of the Self. Arjuna asks :

Here the poet tries to give the description of Visvārupa as seen by a third party, Sanjaya who was given clairvoyant powers by Vyasa, the reputed author of the Mahabharata and the Gita. The blind king also comes thus to know of it indirectly. But the Lord states, according to the poet, that Arjuna alone could see it. How did Sanjaya then manage to peep in ? Was the Lord aware of this espionage ? The poet, further, does not seem to have any correct understanding of the *varieties* and *limitations* of clairvoyant powers. The vision of Sanjaya, bestowed on him by Vyasa, for example, must have been different from that of Arjuna, and *limited* to the *physical* plane, enabling him merely to describe what happened on the battlefield ; and he could have seen only what the assembled warriors could witness in the place and not what Arjuna was experiencing subjectively. In other words, Sanjaya could not have *seen* the Visvarupa as an *objective* phenomenon without the rest on the battlefield also seeing it simultaneously ! We have therefore to conclude that Sanjaya's description of the appearance is only the 'fancy' of the poet, a mere poetic fiction. Otherwise, how could the Lord assert that the vision was vouchsafed to Arjuna alone ?

It is also remarkable that, throughout the recital, the blind king does not utter a single syllable expressive of reverence or rapturous devotion such as an intimate description of the God-head might be expected to inspire. If the slightest impression had been made on his mind by Sanjaya's narration, he might have put a stop to the battle even at that stage, when it was known that the issue was a foregone conclusion ! But nothing of the kind occurred. The blind king was adamant.

From the description given in this chapter how can we say that Arjuna *saw* the Lord's Self ? This 'Visvarupa' exhibition may at best have been a variety of 'thought-form' produced in Arjuna's mind or a sort of hypnotic (subjective) effect on him and nothing more. Arjuna stands 'outside' the picture, as an *external* observer, and is not incorporated into the vision by any consciousness of *at-one-ment* with the Lord. When the Lord addresses Arjuna in the scene, it is not intelligible wherefrom and how He could speak or Arjuna hear. The consciousness of unity with the Supreme Self that one may expect as the result of a Divine Revelation will be contrary to the description of the Visvarupa here. How can this vision be described as something that even the gods covet ? We doubt the genuineness of this chapter—however the traditional commentators might have viewed it. To us, this Visvarupa stands only as a metaphysical monstrosity.

The Lord says :

5. Behold My Forms divine which are hundred-fold and thousand-fold, of various kinds, colours and shapes.
6. Behold the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, the Asvin-twins and the Maruts. These many marvels were never seen before.
7. Behold the whole world, moving and unmoving, shown in My body as one (collected whole), and also whatsoever you desire to see.
7. Since however you cannot see Me with your normal eyes, I bestow on you divine sight. See the *yoga* of My Lordliness.

This, of course, assumes that it is Vishnu who contains in Himself all these beings. Hence He is not mentioned separately. This represents the Vaishnava bias of the author, as verse 17 further indicates.

16. I see You with many arms, bellies, mouths, eyes and Yourself existing everywhere, infinite in forms, with no ending or middle or beginning. You are the Lord of all and infinite in form ;
17. You shine with crown, mace, discus, a blazing mass radiating on all sides and dazzling the sight from all sides, incomparable in lustre, bright as the sun and fire.
18. You are the Imperishable, the Supreme One of all knowledge, the stay and support of all this world ; You are the Unexhausted and the protector of the eternal Dharma, the Primal Purusha ; such is my conviction.
19. I see You as the One without beginning, middle or end, Infinite in power, infinite-armed, with the Sun and the Moon as eyes, shining with the face of dazzling fire, heating the world with Your radiance ;
20. By You alone the whole earth, the heavens and the space between, in all directions are filled. Seeing Your wondrous and awe-inspiring form, the three worlds seem to be oppressed ;

Are the denizens of the three worlds also to be supposed to have seen this form ? Who sees whom, how and wherefrom ? The description seems to be a too literal picturisation of the highly symbolic Upanishadic conception of Brahman as the All.

Sanjaya says :

9. Having so said, the Great Yogesvara Hari showed to Partha His Supreme Lordly form,
10. (endowed) with many faces and eyes, many wondrous features, many divine ornaments and with many divine weapons upraised,
11. With divine garlands and clothes, and anointed with divine unguents, the God marvellous every way, infinite and with faces turned everywhere ;
12. His radiance was as though a thousand suns rose up in the sky simultaneously ; such was the splendour of the Great One.
13. There Arjuna beheld as at one place the whole world in its manifoldness, in the body of the Lord of all the gods.
14. Then Arjuna, his hair standing on end in wonder, bowed down his head to the Lord, and with folded hands (in obeisance) said,

One wonders if ever any God-form could have been pictured like this ! It appears almost like a grotesque materialisation, caricaturing the concept of Brahman's ubiquity which the Upanishads express in symbolic language. Why should 'God' be 'ornamented' as described here ? Why weapons for Him ?

Arjuna says :

15. I see all the gods in Your body, O God, as well as all beings with their distinct marks,— Brahma on His lotus seat, Isa and all the Rishis and the divine serpents.

26. The sons of Dhritarashtra and their princely followers, with Bhishma, Karna, Drona and even the warriors of our own armies,
27. Rush into Your gaping mouths sharp-toothed and awe-inspiring ; some are caught between Your teeth and have their heads crushed and ground ;
28. As the rushing waters of rivers hurry oceanwards, so also these men, heroes and kings, are seen rushing in haste into Your fiery mouths ;
29. As moths speed headlong into a flaming fire for their own destruction, so also these men rush in haste to be destroyed in Your mouths ;
30. You seem to devour all by Your mouths, licking up by fiery tongues these men on every side. By Your blaze the whole world is filled up ; by Your scorching radiance the universe seems to burn ;
31. Great Lord, how terrible is Your form ! Be appeased. Salutation to You. Let me see again Your original form. This manifestation of Yours bewilders me.

This is nice testimony, indeed, from Arjuna himself, to the 'divine' vision that he wanted to have and was shown by the Lord !

Then the Lord begins to speak,

32. I am Time, the Great Destroyer of worlds. I am come to destroy the world of men. All

21. The celestial hosts enter into Your form ; some in consternation praise You with folded hands ; the Maharsis and the Siddhas, in bands, saying 'svasti' (hail) sing Your praises in abundance.
22. Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, the Visvedevas, the Asvins, Maruts, Ushmapas (?), Gandharvas, Yakshas, Siddhas, Asuras, in hosts, look on You in wonder.

From this point the picture begins to develop into one of horror, unrolling like a 'movie' in an unimaginable complication of metaphysical repulsiveness !

23. Looking at Your mighty form with many faces and eyes and a great many arms, thighs and feet, many-bellied and with many fierce teeth, the worlds are seized with fear, as well as myself !

Next Arjuna begins to shake with fear at the sight 'divine,' that he so much longed to see in the hope of attaining 'spiritual' ecstasy ! It is not strange that he should request later on that the Lord should resume His natural normal appearance.

24. Your multi-colored radiance touches the sky. Your mouth opens wide, Your wide eyes shine and sparkle. Seeing You thus I quake. Courage and calmness have left me.
25. Your sharp teeth and Your mouths with their flames of destruction, seen by me, make me lose the sense of direction. Have mercy, Lord of the worlds, be appeased.

Rejoice in Thy renown and sing Thee hymns of  
praise ;

The rakshasas, afraid, in all directions fly.

While all the Siddha-hosts salute and bow to  
Thee.

37. How should they not adore Thee, O Great Soul,  
Thou greater ev'n than Brahma, First of causes !  
Infinite, Lord of gods, the Home of all the  
worlds,  
Imperishable, Sat, Asat, and That beyond.
38. The First of gods, Purusha Thou, the Primal  
One,  
Abode Supreme of This, the whole and all,  
The Knower, the Knowable, the Place as well  
Beyond.  
The whole is spread in Thee, Thou infinite in  
form.
39. Vayu, Yama, Agni and Varuna art Thou,  
The Moon, Prajapati, the Great Grandsire as  
well.  
To Thee I make obeisances, over and over ;  
Thousands of salutations I do make again.
40. I bow to Thee in front and ev'n behind as well,  
On every side to Thee, the All, I bow again.  
Of valour infinite and pow'r unmeasured Thou,  
All is by Thee possessed and hence art Thou,  
the All.
41. If in my early ignorance I addressed You in  
fondness and familiarity as friend and called

these warriors ranged to fight are fated to die. None escapes except yourself !

However, Arjuna was not the only one who survived ! Then the order from which no psychological escape is possible is given to Arjuna by the Lord,

33. Arise and win fame. Having conquered your enemies enjoy the realm filled with prosperity. All these are killed by Me. Be thou only the instrument of action.

Human beings are only to work out the sankalpa or idea of God ; they are not real actors but instruments in His hands. (This is also the gist of the teaching in Ch. II).

34. Drona and Bhishma (who sided with Duryodhana, apparently against the Lord's wish), Jayadratha, Karna and other warriors have already been slain by Me. Conquer them without fear ; fight. You will vanquish them, your rivals, in the field.

How 'fairly' these were vanquished in the battle is well known to the readers of the Mahabharata !

Sanjaya says (to the blind king),

35. Arjuna, having heard the Lord's speech, with his hands folded (in salutation), shaking with fear and prostrating himself, said to the Lord in a stammering voice,

\*36. Lord of the senses, rightly doth the universe

\* Verses 36 to 40 and 43 and 44 bring back to the author his undergraduate days at Mrs. A. V. N. College, Vizagapatam, when the late P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was the Principal, made the College work begin with a recitation of these 7 verses by some selected student each day.

"The Lord says,

47. By My grace you have seen this supreme form revealed by the yoga of the Self, the form radiant, omnipresent, infinite, primary, which none but yourself has ever seen.
48. It is not by the Vedas, yajnas, adhyayan as, gifts or severe austerities that this form of Mine could be seen in the world of men ; you alone (of men) have seen it.
49. Be not troubled or confounded, having seen this My form terrible. Cast away fear and be at peace. See again My normal appearance.

:Sanjaya says to Dhritarashtra,

50. The Lord having thus spoken to Arjuna withdrew His aweful appearance ; and appearing in His natural form released Arjuna from his terror.

The introduction of Sanjaya here, as also in the earlier portions, appears to be only a poetical device employed for the sake of narration.

.Arjuna says,

51. Seeing again Your gentle form, my mind has now become normal again.

This confession of Arjuna's at the end of his vision should be sufficient to show us what value we should attach to this Visva-rupa-darsana incident, viewed whether as a panegyric of God-head or as a metaphysic of the Brahmic Self !

You importunately Krishna, Yadava, friend,  
not knowing Your divinity,

42. If in a jesting mood I acted irreverently towards  
You in play, while resting, seated or eating,  
when You were alone or in company, forgive  
me the carelessness, O incomparable and in-  
scrutable One.

43. Father art Thou of worlds, of that which moves  
and stands ;

Worthy of reverence, the Higher Guru Thou ;  
Like unto Thee is none ; how can a greater be,  
In glory Thou unequalled in the lokas three ?

44. Therefore I fall prostrate, to Thee my body  
bow'd.

Be pleased to bless, I pray, Thou Lord adorable;  
As doth the father with the son, as friend with  
friend,

The lover his beloved, bear ev'n with Me, O  
God.

45. What was never seen before, is now seen by me  
and my heart is full of joy. Yet my mind  
quakes with fear. Be merciful and show  
Yourself again (in the normal form) as of  
old, O God of gods, the Seat of all the worlds.

46. I want to see You again with Your usual em-  
blems of crown, mace, and discus as before.  
Be You pleased to appear in Your four-armed  
form.\*

\* How can there be 'four' arms in the normal human form ?  
Are they symbolic ?

## CHAPTER XII

### BHAKTI YOGA

In this chapter we find an edifying exposition of the cult of Bhakti towards the God-head conceived in a concrete form,—though it repeats only the main teachings of the Second Chapter, on Buddhi yoga. Arjuna asks, being highly impressed by the last words of Sri Krishna, for a more detailed account of the nature of Devotion by which one can qualify oneself to enter into the bliss of unity with God. However, Sri Krishna is made (by the author in his bias for developing a theistic outlook) to draw a needless distinction between the worship (upasana) of the Unmanifest Brahman and that of a concrete manifest God. The Lord, in His answer, shows that devotion to a concrete conception of God is *more easy* for the concrete mind, but does not make any difference so far as the Goal is concerned. We may note, however, that the Unmanifest cannot be really said to be an *object* of any act of devotion.

Arjuna asks,

1. Of those devotees, ever harmonised in themselves, who worship You (as God) and those others who seek the Eternal and the Unmanifest (Brahman), who is the better versed in yoga ?

The Lord replies,

2. Those who with their minds centred in Me and ever harmonised, worship with supreme faith,

The Lord says,

52. This appearance of Mine is hard to see. You have seen it. The gods themselves ever long to have a glimpse of it.
53. I cannot be seen, as you have seen Me, by means of either the Vedas, or austerities, or alms or gifts.

This oblique reference to Vedas, etc., here and at 48 suggests that tilting at the Vedic cult and ritualism which the Gita (except in such parts as appear to be interpolations) cannot resist making whenever occasion offers !

54. By devotion to Me alone is it possible for one to see Me thus, and to know and see in essence and enter into (My nature).

Next we have the last verse of the chapter that leads to the topic of the next chapter.

55. He who acts in My name (or does actions assigning the fruit to Me), who is ever attached to Me (to whom I am the Supreme goal), whose devotion is to Me, who is free from attachments, who has hate for none among all the beings, does reach (or attain) Me.

theistic bias. This statement should be more appropriately reversed ; the correct order of preference would have been indicated if the Lord had said that those who worship Him would be able, through Him, to *also* reach the same Brahman, the Origin of all, which is describable only in negative terms. Sri Krishna should be considered as a ' substitute ' (as Saguna) for Brahman, needed for those who require a concrete object for their Bhakti,—the result being ultimately the same.

Sri Krishna next gives the reason for His preference for Saguna upasana :

5. The difficulty of those whose minds are given to the Unmanifest is greater ; for, the path of the Unmanifest is hard for embodied beings to follow (that is, for the concrete-minded).

This remark, put into Sri Krishna's mouth, is rather strange. We have no reason to suppose that the Nirgunopasana, the way of the Unmanifest, is never intended for us mortals at all ; for, were that the case, it would not have been advocated or even mentioned in the Upanishads.

Any yoga endeavour is only for men in their embodied state and not at the disembodied level where we can be at best only in a ' subjective ' condition. The yoga which a person follows here, on earth, should suit his psychology. ' Abstract ' and ' concrete ' are classifications, into two classes, of all individuals. One might, for example, say that mathematics is a difficult subject. But we should enquire to whom it is so. To the non-mathematically minded the subject is no doubt difficult ; but to the mathematical mind it is easy. The same

are, I am convinced, men of the firmest resolution.

We may take it that the main purpose of the teaching in this part of the Gita is Bhakti of a concrete type directed to Sri Krishna as the object, understanding Him as the representation of God-head to whom our whole mind and all our activities are to be assigned, without any attachment to ourselves as agents, by maintaining the attitude described as Karma yoga. Hence the preference shown to Bhakti towards the concrete God-form in Sri Krishna. It must be remembered that throughout the Gita Sri Krishna was speaking of Himself as at-one with Brahman or God-head, and drew no distinction between Himself and the Unmanifest and Eternal One (as 'That' beyond which there is none VIII. 21, XV. 6). Yet this concept of Brahman has been purposely thrown (by the author) into the background here, because the teaching of the Gita is for men engaged in the world of actions and dealing with objective situations. To those who are not so situated, the Upasana of contemplative life directed to Brahman is equally open and possible. Hence,

3—4. They who adore the Indestructible, the Ineffable (or the Undeterminable), the Unmanifest, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchangeable, the Immutable and the Eternal (all epithets of the Upanishadic Brahman, as Nirguna, unqualifiable Reality) who have their senses controlled, their minds regarding all as the same, and who wish for the welfare of all, these also reach Me.

The word 'also' in the end betrays the author's

the ecstasy of unity with the object of devotion ; this is known as Sagunopasana. It is the rapturous soul-to-soul union attained by the meeting of the devotee and his God in an at-one-ment. It is a variety of *yoga* not to be confused with Bhajanas, worship and other external paraphernalia. It is not connected with prayers, fasts, rituals or ceremonies, or with any form of congregational worship in churches or temples or in the market-place, but meditation in seclusion, silence and secrecy. (cf. Christ's teaching on prayer in Mathew VI. 5—7). 5—7).

The Lord next gives the characteristics of his Bhakta :

6. Those (the bhaktas) who are devoted to Me (as God), who dedicate in complete submission all their activities to Me, with their resolve (yoga) directed to none else, and who worship ever meditating on Me,
7. Them I quickly deliver from their mortal existence in this sea of samsara (the recurring cycles of birth and death), their minds being entirely consecrated to Me.
8. Fix your mind on Me ; and let your buddhi enter into Me. You will, without any doubt, ever dwell thereafter in Me.
9. If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me, then strive by determined practice to reach Me.
10. If you are not able to so practise, then do actions for My sake. Performing actions for My sake, you shall attain perfection.

analogy holds in regard to Sagunopasana and Nirgunopasana. Concrete Bhakti will appeal to some, as abstract contemplation does to others. Hence the distinction is only one of personal preferences and has nothing to do with one being 'superior' to the other. Further, it must be noted that the ultimate end is to realise Brahman and not to remain satisfied with devotion to any concrete and limited representation, or a 'substitute.' The latter can at best be an intermediate stage and not the final goal of yoga. This chapter might as well have begun with a direct exposition of Bhakti (concrete worship) from verse 6, without making any invidious comparisons such as are suggested in 1 to 5. Each type of upasana has its own value to the individual concerned as a means and they must ultimately meet in the perfect man. Either would only represent the following of the line of least resistance for the individual to start with. After all, as Sri Krishna Himself has stated at IV. 33, 36—41, it is not Bhakti as such, but the ultimate Jnana (the saving knowledge of the Self) that it leads to by the grace of the Lord Himself towards whom Bhakti is directed, that is the real aim. Bhakti yoga is a *means*, just as the contemplation of the Unmanifest Brahman is; both ultimately meet in Self-knowledge where both the concrete and the abstract exist but as the two phases of the same fundamental Reality which the individual aims to realise in himself.

However, the Bhakti that is advocated in this chapter is not (and should not be identified with) the sort that is paraded in the streets with dance and song; it is the internal 'movement' of the subject towards the Lord in silence and quietude by a contemplation of God-head as concretised in a Being, so as to attain

purity and emphasis on absolute dedication of oneself to God is not rivalled by any other religious teaching. Of course, the ideas have been already given under a different heading (as Buddhi Yoga) in Ch. II, the difference being that here we are given a central object for self-dedication in Sri Krishna as God, whereas there one is directed to know and realise one's Self.

13. With no ill-will against any being, friendly and compassionate, with no attachment to oneself or egotism, balanced in joys and sorrows, and forgiving,
14. the yogi is ever content, self-controlled and firm in resolve. With his Mind and Will (Buddhi) dedicated to Me, the bhakta (devotee) is dear to Me.
15. He who does not harass and is not harassed by the world and is free from the agitations of joy, anger and fear, is dear to Me.
16. He who expects nothing (from the external world), is pure and expert (in the discharge of duties), quiet, free from anxiety, and who renounces all undertakings (as actions with personal aims), he, My devotee, is dear to Me.
17. He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing both good and evil (transcending the conventional distinctions) and is filled with devotion, is dear to Me.
18. He who is the same (*i.e.*, without bias or prejudice) to friend and foe, unaffected by fame and blame, heat and cold, joys and sorrows, and free from all attachments,

11. If you are not able even to do so, then take refuge in Me, well determined, and renounce the fruit of all actions, remaining self-controlled.
12. Better than practice is Jnana ; better than Jnana is meditation ; renouncing the fruit of action is better than meditation. After renunciation there is peace.

These successive steps seemingly given for purposes of indicating easier methods of Bhakti, and the comparisons in the 12th verse, do not enable us to form any clear idea of what the author intended by the sequences and the distinctions he drew. What the Jnana is, to which meditation and renunciation are said to be superior (whereas we understood the latter two as only *means* to Jnana from IV. 33—38 ; VII. 18, etc.) is also vague. It cannot be Sankhya Jnana, for Viveka or discrimination between the Self and Prakriti is the aim of all yoga discipline. The fact that at one place Jnana, at another Karma (yoga) and again at another renunciation and still elsewhere Bhakti should be exalted over the rest, does not conduce to the definiteness of the teaching ; it is only indicative of bias or confusedness in the mind of the author himself. One should know the fundamental aim of the Gita Sastra—the knowledge of one's self as the Pure Self quite distinct from Prakriti and remaining unaffected by its changes, as explained in Chapter II—in order to determine the respective values of the various other 'ideals' mentioned as means. Though the means be many, the end is one.

From the next verse on to the end of the chapter we have a clearer exposition of 'Bhakti,' which in its

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRAKRITI AND PURUSHA

The transition from the preceding chapter to this appears rather sudden. So in some versions of the Gita a preliminary question is introduced as though Arjuna wanted to learn about (1) Prakriti, (2) Purusha, (3) Kshetra, (4) Kshetrajna, (5) Jnana and (6) Jneya, with which topics the chapter deals. How Arjuna came to be previously acquainted with these terms, so that he could put such a question, is not made clear. Moreover, such an introductory question by Arjuna seems to be unnecessary. We do not therefore give any number to this verse, therein following the tradition; we may proceed with Sri Krishna's exposition directly. The Lord says :

1. This body (in the Sankhyan sense of being constituted of the prakritic 'elements'—the three psychic factors of manas, buddhi and ahan-kara and the five material factors of the senses) is called Kshetra (the ground or 'field of space' by which the individual Purusha gains experience); the Kshetrajna is he who is conscious of it: so they say who know (this fact).

This appears to be a reference to the Sankhyas (with Kapila at their head). Though upholding the view that microcosmically the body is Kshetra and the individual Purusha is Kshetrajna, the later Sankhyas do not admit

19. who is unperturbed by praise or dispraise, who is silent, content with whatever comes, with no (love of) home, firm in resolve, and full of devotion,—he is dear to Me.
20. He who follows this nectar-like wisdom (dharma) as taught herein and is full of faith and is resigned to Me, is most dear to Me.

The above verses seem to be an excellent commentary on XVIII. 66. There is nothing in these verses that can be taken as distinguishing a 'bhakta' from an upasaka of the Unmanifest Brahman. The true bhakta is not concerned either with the amenities of life on earth requested as gifts from a personal God, by prayer and worship, or with 'celestial' enjoyments in a heaven.

Thus ends the discourse on Bhakti, the consecration of one's life to the Deity, with no personal cravings.

tween the Self and the not-self or Prakriti, but also awareness of the oneness of all the selves in the Universal Spirit. We shall not call It 'self' since it transcends the level of the 'many.' In this verse it is clear that the Sankhyan plurality of Purushas is passed over as not being the ultimate conception or category (since they are only reflections), and only one fundamental Kshetrajna is postulated. Such easy transition from the Sankhya to the Vedanta was apparently possible at the time of the Gita composition,—unlike in the case of the later Sankhya of the Sutra period. It is quite in keeping with the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman that both the 'material' world of 'forms,' and the world of lives or 'selves' have only One Origin. Brahman is the synthesis of all 'opposites,' like subject and object, life and form, etc. Sankhya is true within the limits of the world of 'forms' and Vedanta should be taken as the 'metaphysic' of the Sankhyan physics. Prakriti and Purusha, as we have noted earlier, should be looked on as 'generic' terms to indicate the primary bifurcation of the original and ever present Unmanifest, at the beginning of the manifestation (and prior to our phenomenal time) of the world process by the 'will to be many'—the one will, that is at the basis of all life, to be, to continue to be and to increase. (This 'will to be' is not an 'evil,' as some pessimistic philosophers think, but the very foundation of the universe,—and we cannot assume that we are wiser than the parent impulse that has brought us into existence!) The inseparable 'duality' of the primary factors of the manifest world is indicative of their co- eternity (Cf. verse 20 in this chapter), somewhat like that of the polarities of electromagnetic phenomena. They must exist together and one

a Supreme Purusha for the whole cosmos (macrocosmos) conceived as Kshetra. Of course, we should not imagine a too close analogy between the microcosmic relation of the body and the soul, and the macrocosmic relation between the world and God ; for whereas the God-conception means lordship of the cosmos, our body-soul relation is different. The Gita doctrine of Kshetrajna is different from that of the modern Sankhyas ; it is the same as that of the Vedanta and refers to the Brahman-Atman of the Upanishads, (as the very next verse shows). Whereas in the Sankhya we have distinct Kshetrajnas as Purushas unconnected with one another and 'infinite' in number, in Vedanta as well as here in the Gita, only *one* Kshetrajna is postulated, the 'many' being, as it were, 'reflections' of the one in the various Kshetras. The One, thus appearing 'reflected,' is therefore *not* 'personal' to any Kshetra ; it is the unity of God-head in which we are 'somehow' both distinct and together, (Cf. Ch. II. 12). We may say again, as we noted before, that the Sankhya of the Gita must have been the 'original' doctrine quite consistent with and complementary to the Upanishadic Vedanta. This chapter shows their entire agreement. To know, or rather to *realise*, oneself as that 'reflection' of the Universal Spirit, by which the individual entity attains the Eternity of Being ever remaining consciously at-one with the Parent source is the aim of the Vedantic ideal of life.

2. Know Me as the Kshetrajna in all the Kshetras  
(the one Self or Knower in all the bodies). Knowledge of the Kshetra and the Kshetrajna is *the* knowledge, in My opinion.

This knowledge means not only discrimination be-

body that we are conscious, too, of an external world. The key to the problem of matter-life relationship must, therefore, be found in our own 'self-consciousness,' though we do not know yet how to use it to get at a more intimate and direct knowledge of the world. Even in regard to our own body-workings such as digestion, circulation, sensation, motor control, etc., we have not yet evolved direct consciousness. Much less do we know how one is born, grows, lives, falls ill, decays and dies. The 'ideal' of immortality can be real when and only when we have 'direct and intensive knowledge' of our own bodies, and control them in the name of our unity with the Great Life of the cosmos itself. No one has a right to say 'I am Brahman' until such *direct* and *primary* knowledge functions in oneself as one's self-consciousness. It is not a mere verbal repetition of the Upānishadic mahavakyas like 'So'ham Brahma' etc. that makes one a mukta or an immortal. It is the realised life of at-one-ment of the 'subject' and the 'object,' the self and the body, that is the highest 'self-knowledge' and 'self-control,' the true Jnana of Brahman. Merely theoretical discrimination between the Self and Matter, which the Sankhyas advocate, leads us to no goal of full and real self-existence or Mukti.

The individual differences in the experiences of the Purushas, which the Sankhyas use as an argument to prove 'absolute' distinctions in the Purushas themselves (in spite of the use of a common name, Purusha), are to be explained as being due only to the spatial differences of their respective Prakriti *upadhis* or *kshetras*. Life and consciousness in all is one only, even as matter is fundamentally one. If matter at a particular place be on fire, it does not mean that the whole material uni-

cannot disappear leaving the other to remain ; only thus will a world become possible between them. Similar is the case with all the 'duads' of 'opposition' like 'subject' and 'object,' etc., which are so often mentioned in the Gita and which we are asked to 'transcend' to realise the higher synthesis. 'Matter' or Prakriti is thus 'ideal' in its origin where the *esse* is also the *percipi*, that is, at the Brahmic level (and not in our phenomenal plane where it is given once for all as indestructible and eternal) where, along with Life (or Purusha), it remains as the one abiding Unmanifest (Avyakta). All 'opposites' are like 'theses and antitheses' synthesised in the concept of Brahman. Hence there can be no opposition in any absolute sense between ideal and real, or idealism and realism. The Sankhyan dualism of Prakriti and Purusha is thus overcome and reconciled in the Vedantic Brahman. The yogi aspiring to know Brahman is therefore advised to transcend the dualism of all 'opposites'—by a 'Brahmic Synthesis' in himself.

That Prakriti and Purusha, the eternal 'twins' of Sankhya, are capable of synthesis into a unity of being is well indicated in our own consciousness where we seem to be both body and conscious life (in spite of our body being only 'borrowed material'). In respect of our body, though it is as much of a physical object as anything else, we have a consciousness of its existence that is direct and quite unlike our consciousness of other external objects. The intervention of the nervous system is only a 'means,' and does not *explain* our direct consciousness of our own bodies since the nervous system itself is a 'foreign' body to our self conceived of as a pure conscious entity. It is through the mediation of our

even in the atomic world). It does not appear to be a mere 'accidental variation' in evolution. Even in the stories of re-births in the Puranas, the law is supposed to be that a female (especially a goddess) is reborn as a woman, while a male (with rare exceptions) is reborn as a male. The very first bifurcation at the dawn of evolution, is, as we have noticed elsewhere, into the polarity of 'prakriti' (as a negative or female, sakti) and of 'Purusha' (as a positive or male, Jiva or Siva). In yoga literature, there are suggestions which indicate that 'Siva' or the Jiva-principle should be reunited (in the Sahasrara, the top plane of manifestation) with his sakti (his female-aspect functioning at the bottom as Kundalini in Muladhara) at the end of the cycle of their evolution through a world-process, in order to attain 'Moksha' and win immortality. In practical yoga-cults (not mentioned in the Gita), it is such re-union that is the one essential condition of attaining real liberation and standing as a complete individual. This may be symbolic of the real relationship that exists between the male and the female forms of a *real single soul-principle*, or Jiva-Monad, as the consummation of their (or its) evolution process. The highest gods, the Trimurti, are always pictured each with his Sakti, as two-in-one. Separated, each of these gods becomes powerless (sakti-hina) to accomplish his function in the cosmos. This is specially illustrated in the form of Mahadeva, the Ideal Yogi. It cannot be otherwise with men. Here also we must be considered as 'duads' in manifestation and none of us when separated from his (or her) 'other,' would represent the fullness of being, the two in their 'togetherness' constituting the unit of 'existence' as the jiva-monad. (It is thus that 'marri-

verse is in conflagration ! So also if a particular Purusha should have a particular experience, the other Purushas need not be conscious of it. The postulate of their metaphysical unity should never and can never be questioned ; it would otherwise make both comparisons and contrasts unthinkable.

3. What the Kshetra is, what its nature and modifications are, and whence it comes ; and what He (the Kshetrajna), the dweller, is and what His functions are, hear these now briefly from Me.

'Kshetra' as the field or ground, is one's body-structure microcosmically (or the world-environment macrocosmically) and is used in the neuter gender. But since Kshetrajna, as the 'knower' of the Kshetra, is in the masculine gender (though, to be sure, 'gender' in Samskrit is peculiar) the question may be asked regarding sex, whether it belongs to the soul or to the body. It is also a problem how and why the bodily sex-differentiation should have come about at all if it had no deeper significance even at the very origin of evolution, in the 'idea' to become 'many.' The Gita is silent on the point. 'Purusha' simply means 'dweller in the body.' We have to gather information on the question of the 'sex' of the soul from Puranic stories and their implications. Externally viewed, sex seems to belong to the body alone ; but there should be also a 'noumenal' cause for it. The various gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon indicate that sex is a fundamental distinction at the very root of all beings. Sex pervades almost the whole organic kingdom. (And the scientists of the future may discover its analogues

4. Rishis have sung (of Him) in various ways in Vedic hymns of different metres; and the logical Brahma sutras by decisive terms also (have done the same).

This may indicate that the 'Brahma sutras' preceded the composition of the Gita. The sutras here mentioned may have been other than those of Badarayana, since other schools of thought are mentioned in these sutras themselves. Or, as the author of the Gita is traditionally supposed to be the same as that of the Badarayana sutras, that may account for the reference here. But the treatment of Sankhya is different in these two works and that throws a doubt on the alleged identity of their authorship.

5. The great (five) elements, the ego-making principle (ahankara), the higher intellect or conceptual thought (buddhi), Avyakta (proto matter), the senses ten and one (manas), and the five objects of the senses:

These twenty four headings appear to be the 'categories' of the later Sankhyas, and with Purusha (who is taken as many in number) make up their 25 enumerations. This verse appears to elaborate the Sankhyan view of the eight-fold prakriti of VII. 4, the para-prakriti being probably the 'avyakta,' and the later Sankhyan 'tanmatras' being the great five mentioned here, while the last five would represent the pancha bhutas, ether, air, fire, water and earth (as products). Manas is considered as an 'internal sense,' as something 'receptive,' being probably taken as concerned with sensory or perceptual judgments, while Buddhi might represent 'conceptual' thought.

ages are made in heaven,' the ideal world.) That is why we remarked earlier that neither a celibate nor a sanyasi can by himself be a Brahman-knower. The original 'monadic' state of a Jiva gets divided as two (a duad) for evolution and must again unite as two-in-one in the end to represent the fullness of realised Brahma-hood. Neither man nor woman would represent in its separateness the wholeness of the monad's reality. Each 'Siva' must discover his 'Sakti' and each Sakti must meet again her Siva, at the end of their evolution to become one in two as the unit that has gained immortality. The idea of a sexless abstract soul is *unreal*. From the original undifferentiated state of 'neutral' unity whence evolution started, the monad finally emerges as a *definite* two-in-one-entity at the end, developing by differentiation the two fundamental characteristic powers of 'life-giving' and 'form-building.'

This view of the sexes would enhance rather than lower the spiritual value of their relation. (It is unfortunate that to-day there should be an unhealthy and unspiritual competition between the sexes.) Plato, the philosopher, also said that man or woman considered in isolation would not represent the true *unit* of existence. Even biologically each is incomplete without the other. How much more true would that be from the spiritual point of view? No god of the ancient pantheons is represented without his sakti principle. Our goal is not to merge back into the original neutral unmanifestness (even were it possible), but to be fully manifested beings. Otherwise there would be no meaning in the concept of evolution at all. Evolution, as we have noted elsewhere, is not 'much ado about nothing.'

as the one Kshetrajna (of verse 2) 'reflected' in the individual. It is under the control of the Higher Purusha that the individual purusha of 21 would be able to free himself from bondage to Prakriti by discrimination (Viveka). It is such an 'intermediate' position between the kshetra and the One Kshetrajna, that seems to be the status of the Sankhyan purushas (in their plurality). The absolutely One Kshetrajna (of verse 2) is thus seen to be *no category* along with the kshetra and the plural Purushas of the Sankhyas. Hence the ordinary Sankhya omits to mention It in its usual enumeration, while Vedanta postulates It as a necessary metaphysical principle of unity. It is this Supreme Purusha, as the source of reflected purushas, that must be known (*jneya*), on knowing whom as identical with oneself one gets freed from karmic bondage and attains Siddhi, Kaivalya or Nirvana. The 'individual' is thus evolved to the level of the universality of being, the apparent separation being bridged over.

But, how originally he got entangled in Prakriti, and what for, are not 'explained' either in Sankhya or in Vedanta. Without knowing the origin and the reason of our entry into the cosmos, to say that we should try to escape from it, as though from a prison by some trick or other, would appear to be a variety of metaphysical madness. We must know how we came into being, in order to understand the Goal towards which we are being moved, whether we are conscious of it or not. We cannot conceive of the origin of our being as something beginningless; for then, the progress towards a goal would also be endless, logically speaking. To say that the whole affair of evolution is only a world-illusion or Maya

6. Desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, organic unity, vitality and resistance to external forces (dhriti as organic resistance against disruption),—these in brief make up the Kshetra and its modes.

Two pairs of opposites and three organic constitutional characteristics are mentioned here as belonging to our body. They seem to be the biological, instinctive and reflex mechanisms showing how our body has a tendency to react to external stimuli. It is these which the discriminating individual striving to know himself as the pure, unaffected and passive 'Purusha') the 'reflection' in each organism of Brahman as Kshetrajna) is asked to distinguish himself from and transcend, for his liberation. He should not identify himself with the body and its functions since they are foreign to his nature. This dualism of Sankhya is the great metaphysical problem which it leaves unsolved, and which Vedanta tries to solve.

Next we have the nature of Jnana described in 7 to 11. It cannot have its place in the Kshetra which is only an 'object' or field, acting as a 'medium' between the individual jiva-purusha and the world. It must therefore reside in the individual kshetrajna or Purusha of the Sankhyas. The Gita seems to suggest in verse 21 such an interpretation. The mention of a Higher Purusha in verse 22 of this chapter implies that the Purusha of 21 must be such possessor of knowledge who is also the individual who is subject to delusion by attachment to Prakriti and identification with its workings. The Higher Purusha, therefore, must be the same

14. Endowed with all sense faculties without any sense organs, unattached but supporting all, unqualified yet enjoying all qualities;
15. Itself unmoving yet moving all beings, (residing) both in and out (of all beings), undeterminable by (Its) very subtlety, farthest yet nearest (to all) is That;
16. Undivided yet existing in beings as though divided, as the support of beings That should be known; That brings forth as well as absorbs them;
17. That is the Light of all lights and is beyond darkness; Knowledge, the Knowable and the Goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all.

These are all Upanishadic expressions describing Brahman as the all-embracing and all-pervading Reality, in a highly figurative language—the descriptions which were crudely ‘pictured’ by the author in a literal sense in his description of the Visvarupa. The ‘appearance’ as though divided into many (verse 16), while It is the unique One, is the Vedantic (synthesis of) Brahman as the One Kshetrajna of the Gita, the Supreme Purusha (verses 2 and 22 and XV. 18). The paradoxical statements about Brahman here can be understood only when we remember Its transcendental nature. It is to be noted that the neuter ‘It’ or ‘That’ is used throughout to show that Brahman, as the absolute One of the Upanishadic upasanas (methods of contemplation), cannot be comprehended by our intellectual categories which have their meanings in the differentiated world.

and Anirvachaniya, as though this expression were an 'explanation,' is to adopt the policy of the proverbial ostrich.

7—11. Absence of self-esteem and vanity, harmlessness, forgiveness, straightforwardness, service to one's preceptor, cleanliness, fortitude, self-control, dispassion towards the objects of sense, non-egotism, understanding of the nature of the evils of birth, death, decay, disease and sorrow; non-attachment and non-identification with one's sons, wife, home, etc., constant balance of judgment while meeting with desired and undesired events; unwavering and single-minded devotion to Me, resorting to solitary places (for a peaceful environment) and not taking pleasure in company (so that idle talk and social gossip may be avoided); constancy in the knowledge of the Self, understanding the significance of the nature of Reality (or the knowledge of Sankhyan tatvas),—these make up the knowledge (jnana) so called. Nought else is knowledge (Vedantically speaking).

12. I next declare what ought to be known (Jneya) by which you will be able to attain immortality. It is the beginningless Supreme Brahman which cannot be said to be either being or non-being (*i.e.*, it is both at once).

13. That hath hands and feet everywhere as well as eyes, heads and mouths; all hearing and all embracing, That stands;

putting points side by side of one another. The unity of Brahman is unique and belongs to a new dimension or a higher level of thought than we are accustomed to in our normal experience through the senses. The 'dualism' of Prakriti and Purusha and their beginninglessness are to be interpreted within the unity of Brahman and not side by side with it. With Avyakta-Brahman as the Eternal Origin of all, the manifest world begins, as we have already noted, by a primary bifurcation into Prakriti and Purusha, matter and spirit, where neither is the cause of the other, both being simultaneous 'expressions' of the same Origin. Hence the alleged beginninglessness refers to their co-eternity in Brahman. To describe them as absolutely two independent eternals would not only lead to the positing of no relation between them but also make it impossible to think of them 'together.' The two are the eternal twins brought out, like the positive and the negative polarities, in the act of manifestation, as the original dichotomy or metaphysical 'sex-polarity' by which the cosmic function of evolutional process with its differentiations and increase becomes possible. If the Origin should be taken as ever rigidly remaining in absolute homogeneity, it would be as good as dead or non-existent, and no world would come to be. This manifestation or differentiation should not be conceived of as originating in time, since the time-conception itself is a consequence of such differentiation and movement in evolution and has no meaning prior to it. But just as the 'effect' of such differentiation, Life here, is indicative of ever-activity, so also the inherent energising tendency of the Life-principle in Brahman, the Eternal foundation of all existence, expresses itself as the division into the two polarities of spirit and

The Lord (of Sagunopasana) is only to be interpreted as the 'embodiment,' or 'medium' of God-head through whom a 'bhakta' could approach *with ease* the fundamental Reality, Brahman, which in Itself is above all personal qualifications, so as to attain the Goal.

18. Thus are explained in brief the meanings of Kshetra, Jnana, and Jneya (who is the one Kshetrajna). The devotee, understanding these terms, enters into My (state of) being.

Sri Krishna is thus to be understood as the 'Way,' the meditator or saviour, through whom by bhakti one realises one's unity with Brahman—such being an easier form of upasana than Nirgunopasana. He is not to be interpreted as an 'other' to Brahman, the Absolute.

19. Know Prakriti and Purusha (matter and spirit) as both beginningless. Modifications and modes (gunas) are born of matter (Prakriti).

This verse again brings to the forefront the Sankhyan dualism of Purusha and Prakriti. We must try to interpret this dualism and the eternity of the two-categories, without any violence to the concept of the unity of the Vedantic Brahman wherein these two should find their place and function. These two will thus be seen as analogous to the 'thesis' and the 'anti-thesis' finding in Brahman their 'synthesis,' (to use the language of Hegel). Since the synthesis or unity is a transcendental conception, and the parts are what belong to our empirical level we should not interpret the 'wholeness' of Brahman as though it were made up of 'parts,' just as we cannot speak of a cube as made up of squares laid one over another, or a line as resulting by

innate freedom and becomes subject to the determinations of Karma (cosmic process).

22. The Great Ruler (the Iswara of the world who controls teleologically the cosmic process of the Prakriti—Purusha evolution) is the Supervisor and Director, the Lord and Enjoyer. He is the ‘other’ Purusha in the body known as the ‘Higher Self,’ who is beyond this (individual Purusha).

Apparently this verse suggests two Purushas in the Kshetra, one the personality that is entangled in the workings of the prakriti of the body, and the other, the reflection of Iswara, as the Higher Self. This Higher Self is not what is *personal* to any body or kshetra. He is the one Kshetrajna who is reflected as many in the various Kshetras. It seems as though the personal self is a sort of shadow self sent forth as a ray to gain experiences, and is ultimately to gain ‘immortality’ by identification with the Higher Self and by detachment from the workings of the prakritic body. Isvara or God ‘reflected’ in each individual as the Higher Self, is not Himself the entity that is to attain Moksha, but the giver of Moksha and Immortality, the Guru of gurus and Inspirer, who becomes eternally established in the individual self when he unites himself with Him by overcoming the limitations and entanglements of Prakriti. Hence He is described as ever remaining One while ‘appearing’ as divided. The personal ego becomes the immortal individual by such unity with God-head when it transcends the separatist consciousness arising from entanglement in the isolating activities of Prakriti. The ‘son’ becomes thus one with the ‘Father.’ The shadow-self which otherwise is mortal would become immortal

matter, Purusha and Prakriti. This being a 'transcendental' event, it should not be imagined (or pictured) even in terms of *our* space ; we should think of both time and space as themselves effects of this primeval division. It is an *intensive* or idealistic process, not an extensive, space-time event. Hence Prakriti and Purusha can be described as 'beginningless' ; they are not cosmic 'events.' They precede the cosmic process of evolution, belonging, like Plato's Ideal or archetypal world, to the Ideational level of the original conception that acted as the *seed* for the world's coming into existence.

20. Prakriti is said to be the ground (or reason) of causes and effects (*i.e.*, the causal relations). Purusha is the reason for the experience of joys and sorrows.

Prakriti may be taken as the mechanical aspect of the cosmos, the *quantitatively* determined causal relations of the material world. Purusha determines the aspect of 'values,' the teleology of the cosmos, by the experience of pleasures and pains in the cosmic life. (The teleological factor remains 'outside' the quantitative character of the mechanical causal relations where the 'causes' are equal to the 'effects.')

21. Purusha environed by Prakriti experiences the qualities produced by it (Prakriti). Association with the qualities of Prakriti is the cause of his birth in good and evil wombs.

Purusha by such attachment makes himself part and parcel of the mechanical workings of Prakriti and allows himself to be drawn into births ; he thus foregoes his

One who possesses a clear knowledge of these factors can never act amiss, so as to be bound by actions and to be re-born ; that is, he has learnt the lessons of experience in the body, and is fit to realise his unity with Brahman, with the God in Him.

24. Some by meditation perceive the Self (the Supreme Self) in their individual self (as a reflection within themselves); others know this (as an intellectual conviction) by San-khya yoga, and still others by Karma yoga.
25. Others who, not being acquainted with what is said here (by Me to you) but having heard of it (learning it) from others, live accordingly with faith in what they have heard—they also go beyond mortality.
26. Whatever creature is born, whether moving or unmoving, be it known that it is so born by the union of Kshetra and Kshetrajna (i.e., by the two cosmic principles of Prakriti and Purusha).
27. He only truly perceives who sees the Supreme Iswara (God) as seated equally in all beings (cf. XVIII. 61) as the never-perishing One in the ever-perishing forms.

Of course the Iswara referred to here is the same as the one Kshetrajna principle (that is no particular individual's monopoly). There is thus no room for anybody to say 'my god and your god.'

28. He who despises everywhere the same Lord that dwells in all, does not destroy the self by

by at-one-ment with the Higher Self which is no other than the reflection of God-head Itself in the individual,—when the reflection becomes a permanent or eternal fact of the establishment of the Supreme in the individual so perfected in evolution. This is what is meant by unity with Brahman and must indicate *existence which ever remains*; it is not what is supposed to occur after death. God must dwell in the individual who has become perfect. We do not and cannot rise up somewhere to Him, as though He were far away. It is He that comes down and dwells in us, because He finds that we have become proper vehicles for Him. It is thus that the God-head is to be realised and established in us when none of the evils that pertain to our present mortal life can affect us. Only then can we say that we are real 'microcosms.' The body (*kshetra*), soul (*Sankhyan Purusha*) and Spirit (the Higher Self), (using the language of St. Paul), which make up man are, as at present they function in us, unconnected and do not make a unitary being. They must be integrated into one unity when alone the perfect man becomes an established fact. This is done when the Higher Self, this reflection of Iswara or God-head, is *established in us*. Until this is done we are only like fleeting shadow-pictures. (The apparently composite nature of our being as described here need not surprise us, since a little reflection would show how, even as we are now, as psycho-physical entities, we are bodies of different constitutional factors *plus* life and consciousness and yet we use the unitary expression 'I' as though we were unities.)

23. He who knows the Self (Purusha) and Prakriti with its gunas, however he acts, will not be born again.

selves. Even matter as Avyakta or Mulaprakriti is one. How, then, can there be any 'scientific' or philosophical ground for a so-called 'realistic' or pluralistic universe of distinct 'absolutes' ?

34. Those who understand the distinction between Kshetra and Kshetrajna by the eye of wisdom, and know the liberation of beings from Prakriti, they reach the Supreme (Brahman).

The tendency of both the Sankhya (of the Gita) and Vedanta is mainly to show that we are not our bodies, but that we are in reality the 'rays' of the Pure Spirit (the One Brahman-Atman) though we are gaining experience in a foreign body ; and that if we only recognise this fact by our understanding and live up to such knowledge by not identifying ourselves with the body-prakriti's workings, we shall become Muktas, attain the immortality of union with our Source and no more get dragged into re-births by Karma. Though this view appears to be simple enough, it leaves out such problems as why there is a world at all and ourselves in it, and why there are these foreign bodies forced on us with which we naturally seem to be identified. Sankhya and Vedanta (as they now stand) only perpetuate a dualism without showing how the 'otherness' of the body is to be transcended ; they merely content themselves with denying the body any unity with ourselves. If Brahman is conceived of as the one source of both the world and the jivas cosmically, why should we, as rooted in It, be asked to distinguish ourselves from our bodily prakriti and deny that it has any value for us ? Mere distinction of ourselves from the body does not seem, therefore, to be an aim that can be metaphysically

the self. He goes along the Supreme Path.  
(Cf. II, 19.)

29. He who sees that all actions are only the workings of Prakriti and that the Self is not the actor, he truly sees.
30. He who sees the variegated existence of beings as centred in One and as expanding out from It, he reaches Brahman (as God-head).
31. This Supreme Self, the Inexhaustible, being Beginningless (i.e., beyond time,—time and space originating *within* it) and Undefinable in terms of qualities (since all qualities also arise *in It*, and not determine It—the so-called Nirguna which is not, however, ‘soonya’ or nothingness), though seated in bodies, neither acts nor is contaminated (there being nothing beyond It as an ‘other’ to It which could contaminate It).

The all-inclusiveness of Brahman is described in this verse.

32. Just as Akasa (space-ether), the all-pervading ‘element,’ by its very subtlety, is not affected (though it is in all objects that ever change), so also the Self (Kshetrajna-Brahman ‘reflected’ in all) seated everywhere in bodies is not affected (nor does it deteriorate).
33. Just as the one sun lights up the whole world, the Kshetri (the Kshetrajna-Self) lights up all the Kshetras (the whole world).

The same idea as in 2 is stated here. There is only one Paramatma in all the individual Purusha-Jivas or

This chapter is noteworthy in that there is very little of personal reference to Sri Krishna, while the impersonal Brahman is greatly prominent. It also represents the pith of the fundamental teaching of the Vedanta of the Upanishads in perfect harmony with the essentials of Sankhya. It is thus of the highest value as an exposition of the Gita metaphysic. It has the further value of showing that the picture of Visvarupa drawn by the author in Ch. XI is only his 'poetic' fantasy, which is repugnant to the spirit of the Upanishadic teachings about Brahman.

Thus the discourse on the distinction of spirit and matter.

sustained, as the goal of this long evolution of organic life. It cannot take us to our Goal of Mukti. The only logical consequence of a metaphysic of Self which posits that in essence we are one with Brahman, is the proposition that we also should be able to establish unity of being with our Prakriti so that our body will no longer stand 'opposed' to us as an 'other,' but will be a full expression of ourselves, as *perfectly manifest beings*. The distinction between body and spirit, instead of being regarded as warrant for the rejection of the body, suggests that the distinction must be transcended in a positive state of unification of ourselves with our prakriti.\* We should stand then as positive or real entities, with no 'otherness' to any aspect of the cosmos, but remain unaffected, as eternal realities. There is no middle position between our being slaves to our bodily prakriti and standing out as its masters. A mere negative attitude or denial cannot represent a *via media* for attaining Mukti. Hence the endeavour of a yogi should be to take 'control or charge' of himself, his 'body' and himself becoming one unity, when alone the defects of decay, disease and death shall no longer affect him, and he shall stand as an *Immortal Fact*. Such alone can be the meaning of Self-knowledge and Self-control; not a mere make-believe of Mukti (as a hope) after death. Until every trace of dualism and otherness is transcended in a higher unity, no one can say, 'I am Brahman.' Mukti, as meaning Freedom, is liberation from dependence on and bondage to an externally acting Prakriti.

\* What is to be transcended is the *externality* of the body but not embodiedness itself. There is no meaning in *existence* without a body-form.

perfection. Taking refuge in this knowledge and getting assimilated to My nature, they are not re-born at the time of the birth of a world, nor are they troubled by its dissolution.

3. The 'Mahat' which is Brahman is my matrix (womb of 'space') in which I place the germ (of the universe). The birth of all beings (jiva-koti) proceeds therefrom.

This is the concept of 'Hiranya-Garbha,' the state of the inception of the universe, spoken of as the 'cosmic egg.' It is 'Mahat-Brahman' (the 'ideal world' of Plato) containing within itself all the possibilities of the universe to come. 'Mahat' is here 'cosmic ideation' symbolised as Brahma the creator. Here the Lord, conceived of as the Supreme Purusha (Para-Purusha or Kshetrajna) speaks of Himself—in much the same manner as the Brahman (neuter) of the Upanishads is described to be—as at once the Father and the Mother, the seed or germ and the womb of the universe. The God-head is thus the two-in-one Parent of the Universe which He (or It) brings into being by that primeval division into two as the womb and the seed, the female and the male prototypes of all generation and increase in the world, the original Kshetra-Prakriti and the Kshetrajna-Purusha. Fools who do not understand either themselves or the world around deride this highly metaphysical and spiritual conception embodied in certain modes of Hindu worship as phallicism (a word of their own creation)—apparently constituting themselves, in their narrow-minded self-righteousness, as the moral dictators of the world! Some even go to the length of

## CHAPTER XIV

### ON THE THREE GUNAS OF PRAKRITI

This chapter tells us more about Prakriti and its characteristic 'modes' or Gunas. Nowhere do we find in it any reason for regarding Prakriti as 'Maya' or for regarding the world as a big illusion in the sense that the later Advaitic Vedantins interpret our experience of it to be. Sankhya and Vedanta are found well co-ordinated in the third section of the Gita in chapters XIII to XVIII, these two schools of thought being equally opposed to the ritualistic religion of the Vedas. To one who wants to reach the Goal of Peace and self-sufficiency, ritualism serves no purpose; it is an abiding value that such a person seeks, not ephemeral pleasures. It is the Path of the Eternal that he seeks, and it is that which the Sankhya-Vedanta of the Gita proposes to offer us. These two, Sankhya and Vedanta, in their co-ordination try to give us a solution of the problem of 'the one and the many' without destroying or sacrificing the value of the one to the other. They are, as it were, the 'outer,' and 'inner' aspects of Reality, inseparable in their unity like the body and the life of an organism.

The Lord says,

- 1—2. I shall further explain that supreme knowledge, of all knowledge the highest, understanding which all the sages (of yore) have gone hence (from re-births here) to supreme

imitations of the cosmic male-female, Purusha-prakriti aspects of Reality. Thus, wherever a new living being comes into existence it is 'God' that is the one Father-Mother,—and so we are not born of sin or stained at birth! The so-called immortal germ-plasm is not our creation, but what God creates in us as the carrier of the seed-principle. Hence the Lord speaks of Himself as the Progenitor Kandarpa at Ch. X. 28. It is in the light of this knowledge that we are to understand also the statement that the parent is re-born in the off-spring, and that the son and the father are one; for in both it is the same 'germ-plasm' that is continuous. We must however not forget that the continuity of the germ-plasm is not to be looked for in its physico-chemical nature, as mere 'matter,' but in its life and vital aspect; the mere-chemistry of the metabolic process is ever-changing like that of any organism which exists only as a 'space-form,' with a continuous in-flow and out-flow of protoplasmic matter.

Next, a discourse on what are known as the 'gunas,' or modes of Prakriti (not as its qualities but as the prakriti-stuff itself) is given by Sri Krishna. It is a Vedantic-Sankhyan view which says that these gunas are at the bottom of all the activities of Prakriti, especially in the moral sphere. The most 'moral' of our actions are those in which the satvic guna is predominant—though even here the action will be 'karmically' binding, unless attachment (sanga) is eliminated. The guna-activity in itself is non-moral. It is in the context of human behaviour that gunas obtain moral meaning. It is this moral aspect that is discussed below.

fancying that we are all born of an 'act' of sin and remain tainted with that original blemish, and advocating that complete continence is the shortest way to salvation !

4. In whatever wombs forms are born, it is Brahman that is Mahat-yoni (the fundamental matrix) and I am the seed-giving male parent. (Cf. VII. 10.)

The original proto-matter from which the whole material universe evolved is called 'pradhana' or mula-prakriti and even Avyakta. On the Vedantic unitary view of Reality, it must be the same as Brahman *in the objective sense* of being the cause of the material or objective world. So considered, it is the universal matrix or mother principle, the mahat-yoni, in which the world-to-be exists conceptually as Hiranya-garbha. The Brahman-Atman of the Upanishads would then represent the Subject or the life-aspect of Reality. The word Avyakta (the original two-in-one state of non-manifestation) is therefore used equally to represent both Brahman and Pradhana, as the two fundamental aspects of Reality. In this verse Brahman is taken to signify the objective or 'mother' aspect and the Lord attributes to Himself the role of the seed-giver or the male parent. But the two are One only.

This explanation of the origin of all beings shows that the earthly parents as 'fathers' and 'mothers' are only 'representatives' of the original metaphysical causes, and not themselves the causes of the generation of beings. 'In the light of this knowledge our earlier remarks about sex will become specially significant. The seed-making and the form-building principles are necessary for the conception of a real unity of being, as the

protector, Brahma Rajasic and producer and Siva Tamasic and destroyer.) These three modes can thus easily be seen as corresponding to the synthesis, thesis and antithesis of the world-process that Hegel described. They go together, as a series, and are responsible for the being, living and dissolving of the cosmic products ; they are inseparable in their inter-relations. They represent the *discontinuous* nature of the material phenomena which make up the birth, evolution and dissolution of the world (according to the cyclic theory). As ultimately all Prakriti is One, so the Supreme Spirit is also One, the exploits of the three gods of the Trimurti, as narrated in the Puranas, being taken as the allegories of the great drama of the world-process which in its material and objective aspect is Prakriti (or Sakti) only ! In this sense Prakriti is Svabhava, Nature considered in itself. Since from the causal point of view Prakriti alone is active, Purusha as Iswara or the individual jiva does not become part of it as a material cause, and hence is said to be the Enjoyer or On-looker, and to be free in Himself. One who likewise understands his own role in life in that sense and looks upon himself as at-one with the Supreme Purusha, of whom he is a projected reflection, will experience the impersonal joy and bliss of the Supreme One who stands in the same relation to the cosmos. If one should take oneself as ' matter,' one would be part of matter or prakriti ; if one should regard oneself as ' spirit,' one would be spirit too. The former is ' karma-bandha ' while the latter is mukti or ' immortality '—such is the Sankhya-Vedantic position.

5. Satva (harmony), Rajas (changeability or instability) and Tamas (resistence or inertia) are the modes arising out of Prakriti. They bind the individual Purusha in the body (who in himself is indestructible as the reflection of Kshetrajna).

These three modes of Prakriti are like the 'thesis,' 'antithesis' and 'synthesis' of the German idealists of the Hegelian School ; they belong however to the material world of the Sankhyas and not to Spirit or Purusha. Rajas stands for thesis, Tamas for antithesis and Satva for synthesis. This triplicity of Prakriti-matter corresponds to a triplicity in the consciousness of embodied Purusha as Sat, Chit, and Ananda, representing the conative, cognitive and affective characteristics of the mind recognised by western psychologists. The sat-chit-ananda character of the self is not even mentioned in the Gita though it is found in the Upanishads.

The Satvic mode of Prakriti is, materially, a state of harmony or balancing of the cosmic forces functioning in an organised body as its healthy condition. It is not a dead static condition of immobility, but the co-ordination of the various factors to form and function as a unitary whole. It conduces to the stability of a body and enables it to continue 'to be' as a whole, against any tendency to dissolution. Rajas is the dynamic or mobile nature, the *elan* of the universe, moving on to newer forms. Tamas is the tendency of beings towards decay and death, the expression of the onslaughts of Time, the Great Destroyer. (These three modes of Prakriti are sometimes correlated to the functions of the Trinity of the Hindu Pantheon, Vishnu being Satvic and

taking of actions and insatiable desire (restless craving) to act are born of it.

This is in evidence in children, primitive people and the so-called 'dynamic' races and persons.

13. When Tamas is on the increase, dullness, stagnation, carelessness and confusion make their appearance (are generated).
14. If a man dies when in him Satva is on the increase, he obtains the pure worlds of the wise sages.
15. If he dies when Rajas is predominant he is re-born amidst those who are attached to action. If in Tamas, he is re-born of foolish parentage.
16. The consequence of a good deed is said to be satvic and pure ; the consequence of a rajasic action is sorrow and that of Tamas is foolishness.
17. From Satva is born knowledge ; from Rajas greed ; carelessness, confusion and lack of understanding result from Tamas.
18. Those who are in satva move upwards (progress); those in Rajas remain in the middle ; the tamasic go down, being addicted to foulest actions and qualities.
19. When the Seer (Purusha) perceives that there is no other actor beside the gunas (prakriti) and realises that That (the Self) is beyond the gunas, he enters into My nature (i.e., the Supreme One).

Next about the moral aspect of the three gunas :

6. Of these, Satva, from its purity, is radiant and health-giving. It binds one by attachment to pleasure and knowledge.
7. Rajas is of the nature of passion (desire) and is due to the attachment to personal sentient life. It binds one by attachment to action (motivated by personal gain).
8. Tamas is due to want of knowledge. It causes confusion and delusion in all embodied beings. It binds one by carelessness, delay and slothfulness.
9. Satva overcomes (one) in pleasure, Rajas in action (which is desire-prompted) and Tamas in carelessness, enshrouding the intellect.
10. (At one time) Satva preponderates, prevailing over Rajas and Tamas ; (at another) Rajas over Satva and Tamas ; (or again) Tamas over Satva and Rajas.

That is, some one guna becomes the preponderating factor in all individuals sometime or other, and no one is free from these variations of the gunas so long as one functions in a prakritic body. Cf. III. 33.

11. When from all the gates of the body (*i.e.*, sense-organs) light radiates and there is understanding, then Satva is to be known as preponderating.
12. When Rajas is on the increase, greed, enterprise (outward-moving tendency), under-

characteristics attributed to one who has transcended the gunas appear to be only 'subjective' attitudes. We have no 'objective' evidence, so far in the history of man, of the realisation of immortal existence *as a fact*. It is only a hope yet, a hope strengthened by philosophies and religions that we have so far devised as answers to our rational demands !

'The Lord says,

22. He who hates not whatever comes (to him as his karmic allotment) or desires (to possess) what does not so come by (the working energies of) prakasa (satva) or pravritti (rajas) or moha (tamas);
23. Who, seated as a neutral unaffected by the gunas, remains unruffled; who stands unmoved, saying 'the gunas move on';
24. Who is at ease (with himself) and treats pleasure and pain indifferently, to whom a clod of earth, a stone and gold are much the same, who looks impartially on those who are dear and those who are not, who is firm-minded and regards fame and infamy alike;
25. To whom honour and dishonour are the same, and so are friend and foe; who gives up desire-prompted undertakings,—such a person is said to be 'beyond the gunas' (guna-ateeta).

This characterisation is in substance the same as that of the Sthita-Prajna in Chapter II. It represents only a mental or subjective attitude. How can this sub-

20. The Dweller in the body when he transcends these three gunas born of the Prakritic body (*kshetra*) enjoys deathlessness, being freed from birth, death, old age and sorrow (or the sorrows of birth, death and decay).

This 'siddhi' is referable to the traditional belief that immortality (Kaivalya or Nirvana) may be obtained as a consequence of the theoretical discrimination of one's self from prakriti and its workings, in a post-mortem state (when this body is thrown out by death). That such 'discrimination' by itself can bring about the 'miracle' of immortality in the real sense, seems to us both meaningless and impossible. As we have noted already, a *bodiless* condition can never have these characteristics of immortality attributed to it; and moreover mere theoretical knowledge, without the further endeavour to evolve the requisite immortal 'vehicle of expression,' will mean nothing 'real.' The 'Higher Path' (Parama-Gathi) so frequently referred to in the Gita, must mean a life of further *practical yoga* by which the individual transmutes, *without dying*, the body given him by nature into one of true expression of himself when it will no longer stand as an externally determined limitation imposed by Karma on him or something destroyable by outer cosmic forces, but will be the medium of his freedom. It is the attainment of such a siddhi that is connoted by the ideal of being at one with Brahman to become a real microcosm.

Arjuna next asks how one who has transcended the three gunas lives and acts (in the concrete life). The Lord, however, continues His teaching in His own way without touching on Arjuna's question specifically. The

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## CHAPTER XV

### ON THE PURUSHOTTAMA

This chapter begins with a quotation from the Upanishad (Katha VII) to represent in figurative language the source of all beings as "That" above and the manifold world as 'This' below, and is intended to elaborate the concept of the Supreme Purusha, the Kshetrajna. The Lord says,

1. Roots above and branches below, the Asvatha (the 'tree' of the cosmos) is said to be the indestructible (in its essence). Its leaves are the hymns (of the Veda). He who knows it is the knower of the Vedas.

In many ancient mythologies of other peoples also the cosmos is compared to a tree.

2. Its branches nourished by the Gunas spread downwards and upwards; its buds are the objects of the senses. Its roots grow downwards (like those of the Indian banyan tree) and are the bonds of action in the world of men.

Here again is a criticism of the Vedic ritualistic cult which is connected with desire for the fruit of actions.

3. Here below neither its form, nor its end nor beginning, nor its foundation can be known; this strong-rooted asvatha being cut down by the strong sword of non-attachment,

jective condition be regarded as immortality without disease, decay, death and sorrow ?

It would be a metaphysical delusion and sophism to first posit an 'other' (as prakriti) opposed to the Self and then deny it so as to assert oneself as free, without solving the questions how they came to be together at all and how their dualism is to be transcended. It is a *real unity of being* that we must attain ; it cannot be had by a subjective denial of the 'opposite.' Hence, any philosophic standpoint other than that of the monistic type will end in leading us nowhere. Such a monism, however, will not satisfy us if it remains merely as an academic supposition ; it must issue in *realisation as a fact* in our concrete life. 'All this is Brahman,' 'I am Brahman,' 'this self is Brahman' and such other Upanishadic Mahavakyas are not mere copybook maxims.

26. He who serves Me by exclusive Bhakti yoga (Chap. XII) goes beyond the gunas and is fit to become Brahman.

(This of course indicates the "easier" method of upasana.)

27. For, I am the Abode of Brahman, as well as of Immortality, of the Indestructible One, of the Eternal Dharma (the law of right living and also of the world-order) and of Infinite Bliss (the Supreme Goal).

This verse should not be interpreted in any narrow sectarian sense but as indicative of the universal nature of Vedanta.

Thus about the triad of gunas, an elaboration of the concept of Prakriti as Kshetra.

9. He enjoys (experiences) the objects, seated in the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste, the smell and manas.

10. Persons deluded by Prakriti do not perceive Him who thus remains, enjoys the Guna-characterised Prakriti and finally departs; but those who possess the eye of discernment know (Him).

This is in accordance with Purusha's function as stated at XIII. 20—21. Yet it is nowhere stated why the Eternal One wants or undergoes the experiences through these various forms or why these forms should come at all into being. That must be the 'mystery' behind the 'Will to be many.'

11. The yogis who strive (to know Him) perceive Him as established in themselves; but those who have not realised themselves will not see Him though they struggle.

12. The radiance of the Sun which brightens the whole world, the radiance that is found in the moon and in fire,—know that splendour as from Me only.

13. Permeating the earth, I support beings by My vitality; as the Soma\* I nourish all plants.

The author seems to be too lavish in the use of the first personal pronoun in the discourse where the third personal pronoun would have served the philosophical purpose better.

\*The Moon, as 'Soma,' is considered the Lord of the vegetable world.

4. the Path beyond should be sought, going along which one returns not (one goes to the Supreme Purusha). I have attained even that Primal Purusha whence the ancient (first) impulse to expand originated.

This indicates Sri Krishna's one-ness with the Supreme God-head.

5. Without self-conceit or delusion, conquering the evil of attachments, ever steadfast in self-knowledge and with desires turned away, freed from the dualism of opposites known as pleasure and pain, the undeluded go along that Path of Eternity.
6. The sun shines not there (*i.e.*, it is self-illuminated) nor the moon nor fire. Having gone there none returns (to re-births). That is My Supreme Abode.
7. Only a ray\* of Mine is the Eternal One (the Seed-Purusha as Kshetrajna) that has become the living beings in the world of jivas (the Sankhyan Purushas). Prakriti builds (round these jivas) the six senses including manas (under the superintendence of the Eternal Ray).
8. The Lord (the reflected Super-Self) who has thus acquired the body, when He abandons it, draws these away (*i.e.*, the functions of manas and the senses), and goes out like the wind carrying away odours.

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\*As an emanation of the Supreme Purusha with which Sri Krishna is one.

of all beings) who penetrating the three worlds sustains them as their Indestructible Lord.

The three worlds are the well known earth, the intermediate region and the heavens. The Supreme Purusha is the source of all the reflected Purushas, Impersonal in Itself but appearing as divided in all.

18. Since I transcend both the Kshara (the psychic) and the Akshara (the noumenal) Self, and am the Supreme (Uttama) I am known both in the world and in the Veda as Puru-shottama.
19. He who, unconfused, knows Me thus as the Supreme Self knows all and adores Me with his whole being.
20. This, the most secret truth (authoritative knowledge) has thus been revealed by Me. Knowing this one becomes wisdom-illuminated and has one's object in life fulfilled.

Apparently, disconnection by non-attachment, from the prakritic body and unification with the Supreme Purusha through the 'reflected ray' is indicated as the final aim of life according to this view. However, we should add that *real* immortality is not what can be had in a body born of a yoni, but by self-creation through yoga—when alone one becomes a true Mukta.

14. Becoming the Vaisvanara fire (the vital energy for food-assimilation in an organism) I take possession of all living beings and co-ordinating the in-going and the out-going breaths (pranas) I digest the food in a four-fold way.\*
15. Seated (psychically) in the hearts of all, I am the cause of memory, cognition and reasoning. I am That which is to be known from all the Vedas; I am also the Vedanta-maker and the Veda-knower.

Next we have the immanence of the Lord described both as the noumenal and the phenomenal essence of all beings.

16. There are two Purushas in this world of beings, the perishable (phenomenal psychic personal ego) and the Imperishable (the noumenal permanent Ego, the 'reflection' of the Supreme Self). The Kshara (the temporary and perishable) is the multifarious (group of) beings; the Akshara (the reflection of the one Purusha or Kshetrajna) is the permanent Ego.

These represent the mortal and the immortal principles in man, and the former should attain immortality by union with the latter, that is, by absorption in or unification with the higher Ego.

17. There is the other, the Supreme Purusha known as the Paramatma (the Original Seed

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\*These four may be the four kinds of tissues in the body, blood, bone, nerve and muscle.

4. Vanity, arrogance, self-conceit, wrathfulness, harshness and unwisdom are the characteristics of one born of asuric qualities) that is, of Rajas and Tamas).
5. The 'Daivi' virtues tend towards liberation ; the 'Asuric' vices lead to bondage. You need not grieve since you are born with the divine virtues.
6. Animal beings in this world fall into two classes ; the Daivi and the Asuri. Much has been said (by Me) about the Daivi variety. Now I shall tell you of the Asuric variety.
7. The Asuric people do not know (to distinguish) the out-going (Pravritti, the external outlook that inspires desires and personal cravings that 'bind') and the inturned (Nivritti, in search of the Self) activities. Nor is there in them cleanliness, (customary) morality or truthfulness.

Pravritti and Nivritti really mean the two fundamental and complementary tendencies in our consciousness. Pravritti is the process of breaking away from the Central Origin ; Nivritti is that of getting linked up with the Source, maintaining continuity-unity with It.

8. They say that the world is without truth, without fixity and without any controlling Lord (Isvara) ; that it is due to mutual attractions caused by desire (lust and passions) and nothing more.

The asuric hold that the prosperity and well-being of an individual are secured by untruthfulness, that there

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DIVINE AND THE DEMONIACAL CHARACTERISTICS

This and the next chapter explain in detail what may be called the 'moral' aspects of the behaviour of the individual Purusha working in a body (kshetra) given by Prakriti and evolving under the parental care of the Super-Self (the reflection of the Kshetrajna). This chapter is thus in continuation of the answer to Arjuna's query at Ch. XIV. 21.

The Lord continues :

- 1—3. Fearlessness, purity of life, steadfastness in the yoga of knowledge (perseverance in the search after knowledge), charity, self-restraint, (ritualistic) sacrifice, study of the sacred scriptures, austerity and straight-forwardness ; harmlessness (non-violence), truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, averseness to calumny, kindness to all beings, uncovetousness, softness, modesty, and absence of fickleness ; energy, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, non-treachery, and absence of pride ; these are the characteristic virtues of one born of divine qualities.

The above are all Satvic qualities and are similar to those enumerated in Chapter XVIII as pertaining to one born with the qualities of a Brahmana.

16—17. With their minds bewildered by many desires and caught in a net of delusions, addicted to the gratification of passions, they fall into a foul hell. Indulging in self-glorification, stubborn, full of the pride of wealth, and self-conceited, they perform with great show sacrifices which are such only in name, being contrary to the scriptural ordinances.

18. Given over to egotism, power and pride, lust and wrath, these hateful people hate Me (the Supreme Soul) both in their own bodies as well as in those of others.
19. These malicious people, vile and cruel, lowest of men, I send down always to demoniacal births.
20. Obtaining such asuric births, deluded in birth after birth, and not being able to reach Me (the Supreme Self) they sink down to the lowest path.
21. Threefold is the gateway to hell, destructive of the self (that is, it stands in one's way of being linked up with the Supreme), namely, Kama (passion), Krodha (anger-hatred) and Lobha (covetousness). These three should always be avoided.

If the proverbial rich man cannot pass through the gates of Heaven, the person possessed of the three qualities mentioned above, has, any way, an easy passage into hell !

- 22—24. The man who is freed from these three gates of Tamas acts for the good of his own

are no moral principles in the world and that there is no God or Providence controlling the world-process ; in other words, they are the materialists.

9. Taking such a standpoint, these lost souls of little wisdom come forward as enemies with fierce deeds destructive of the world.
10. Addicted to insatiable desires and impelled by ambition, conceit and arrogance, and holding to false ideals through delusion, they engage themselves, resolved, in unholy actions.
11. Given to extremely ambitious schemes which end in destruction, and intent on the enjoyment of lust and passion as the highest aim (in life), they think that these alone are the certainties (of life).
12. Held in bondage by hundreds of desire-impulses and given over to lust and anger, they spend on sense-enjoyments much wealth obtained by unlawful means.
- 13—15. The deluded fool (of the asuric type) says (to himself), "This now has been obtained by me, this purpose of mine I shall fulfil, this is already mine and this other shall also be mine ; this enemy I have killed, I shall kill the rest also. I am the lord and the enjoyer. I have my desires fulfilled. I am strong and happy. I am rich and well-born. Who is there equal to me ? I shall perform sacrifices, give gifts and rejoice."

Such is the ahankara-tainted attitude of the asuric individual.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE THREE-FOLD FAITH

The last two verses of the preceding chapter seem only introductory to this one, and might as well be treated as the leading verses here. Arjuna is made to raise a question on the topic introduced in them. But we find that in this chapter the discussion suddenly turns on 'sacrifice' and ritualistic action instead of activity in general (moral behaviour and Dharma), the transition being effected by the surreptitious introduction of the word '*yajate*' in place of the word '*vartate*' of the previous chapter. How or why this change of words came about is not clear. '*Vartate*' refers to behaviour in general, whereas '*yajate*' refers to 'sacrifices.' Thus Sri Krishna in his reply suddenly launches on a discourse on sacrificial actions, and dilates on the influence of the Gunas on the 'motive' to sacrifice. There is no reason shown why Arjuna should be held responsible for the change in the terms. Though this chapter is not confined to the discussion on sacrifices, still the introduction of this irrelevant topic here indicates that the author was the person responsible for the digression.

Thus Arjuna asks,

1. Those who perform sacrifices with faith but against sastraic rules, what kind of 'faith' is theirs, satvic, rajasic or tamasic ?

self and reaches the Supreme goal. He who having set aside the duties ordained by the Sastra (sacred scriptures for the guidance of one's conduct) acts following the bent of his desire-nature, is one who can never attain Self-fulfilment (Siddhi) or happiness or reach the highest goal. Hence the sacred scriptures are the authority as to what should be done and what not. Understanding what is authorised, you must perform actions accordingly (and not give up your Dharma).

The Sastras or sacred scriptures tell us our duty or Dharma as pertaining to our status and position in society. One going against such duties imposed by custom will be considered 'immoral' by the community which holds to such rules of conduct. It is only in relation to the other individuals of a community that moral behaviour has any meaning. An isolated individual, having none towards whom he has to behave in a definite manner, will have no moral consciousness at all developed in him. When these rules of conduct are codified they become authoritative scriptures. If we understand these duties in their historical perspective, they can be seen as varying with the evolution of the social group. Morality, as such, should not be confused with religion, each having its origin and development in different psychological conditions.

8—10. The foods that are pleasing to the Satvic type are those which increase longevity, vigour, strength, health, happiness, and good feeling. They are delicious, refined, sustaining and agreeable. The foods that are liked by the rajasic are pungent, acid, and salty, over-hot, sharp, rough (not soft) and thirst-producing. They engender pain, grief and sickness. The food that is stale, flavourless, putrid or lacking in freshness or that which is made of leavings, and is impure, is dear to the tamasic.

11—13. The sacrifice (yajna) that is offered by those who have no desire for its fruit and who perform it according to the rules in the steady belief that it should be made as a matter of duty, is satvic. The sacrifice that is offered with a definite desire for the fruit thereof or is inspired by vanity (self-glory and show) should be known as rajasic. The sacrifice that is not ordained by the rules, in which food is not offered freely, where there are no sacred recitations or offerings of money-gifts and where proper faith (zeal) is lacking—know that such sacrifice is tamasic.

Distributing food, Vedic recitations and money gifts are the usual observances on all ceremonial occasions, religious or secular, in the Hindu social life. To omit any of these would be ‘tamasic.’

Austerity was referred to in a general way in verses 5 and 6 as asuric, and as rajasic and tamasic in 18 and 19. It is next described in relation to body, speech and

The Lord replies more with reference to the nature of faith (sraddha)—relevantly to the question put in Arjuna's mouth,—than to the nature of yajna or vartana as such. Emphasis is placed on the motive in relation to the gunas of prakriti. Thus he says :

2. Threefold is the nature of the zeal (faith) of men according to their innate nature, satvic, rajasic or tamasic. Hear about them.
3. The faith of man is in accordance with his nature. Man is made up of faith ; what his faith is, that he is also.
4. Satvic men sacrifice to the gods (such as the Vedic deities); rajasic men sacrifice to yakshas and rakshasas ; tamasic people sacrifice to ghosts and elemental nature-spirits (as in the case of savages and aboriginal tribes).
- 5—6. Those men who perform severe austerities unauthorised by the scriptures, who are filled with vanity and egotism, and who are slaves of their desires and passions, and who torment the 'elements' that make up their bodies and Me also, the Inner Dweller of all bodies, know them as asuric in their resolve and lacking in understanding.

We have next a digression on the application of Prakriti's triplicity of gunas to other aspects of human life. (How this development in the discourse arises is not clear.)

7. The food also that is pleasing to men is three-fold, as also sacrificial worship, austerities and gifts. Hear about their distinctions.

16. The austerity of the mind is suavity of disposition, cordiality, reserve (appropriate silence), self-control and purity of sentiment.

These three forms of austerity are the necessary preliminaries of self-control and moral purity for the aspiring yogi.

17—19. The above threefold austerity, observed by men with sincerity, without desire for fruit (like 'praise' from men here or a heaven hereafter) and with self-harmony, is called satvic. The tapas of the rajasic is done for the sake of securing the respect, estimation and adoration of others, and is done in a spirit of vanity. It is unstable and short-lived. The austerity of the tamasic is due to confusedness and foolish persistence; it involves self-torture or oppression of other people (as in the case of Rakshasas like Ravana and others described in the Puranas. Cf. verse 6.)

20—22. Gifts given as duty, not in return for something done or in anticipation of some gain, given too, with due regard to place, time, and person (as in religious charities) are known as satvic. Whatever gift is made with an object in view or for securing 'merit' or is given under constraint or grudgingly is called rajasic. The charity which is given at the wrong place and time and to an undeserving person and which lacks in respect or is given contemptuously is tamasic.

mind (the three karanas or organs of behaviour whose purity is essential for one who wants to know the nature of the Real, as a kind of moral discipline) and considered under the three gunas, as follows.

14. The austerity of the body consists of the worship of the gods, Brahmanas, teachers and wise men and acts of cleanliness (like daily bathing, washing, etc.), brahmacharya (continence) and not causing injury to other (sentient) beings.

This is expressive of the traditional views only—the worship of gods and brahmacharya not being necessarily connected with the knowledge of Brahman. Absolute continence by the best of men would only tend to the degeneration of the race—and is biologically impossible !

15. The tapas (austerity) of speech consists in what does not wound (another), what is truthful, pleasing and beneficial, and in the study of sacred scriptures.

This advice is very valuable ; it shows how we should use our speech and throws light also on how we should use the 'right of freedom of speech.' What is true, merely because it is true, should not be spoken unless there is a positive duty to do so, (as when we have to give evidence in a court of law) if it is likely to wound or injure another. It is said that what is true but displeasing should not be spoken spontaneously. Our tongue, which is naturally so free and difficult to control, is the first object that one aspiring to be self-controlled should curb !

and Tapas. An act that is done as an offering to Tat (Brahman) is also known as Sat.

28. What is done without faith (sraddha),—whether it be the throwing of an offering into the sacrificial fire, or the giving of a gift, or the performance of an austerity, or any other act,—is known as Asat (unreal). It is as nothing here or hereafter.

These last explanations about Om Tat Sat have really no relation to the general topic of the Gita teachings ; but, apparently in the symposium that the author tried to make in the Gita, a place for the time-honoured and sacred mantra, Om Tat Sat, had also to be assigned !

23. "OM TAT SAT"—this is known as the three-fold sound-symbol of Brahman. The Brahmanas, Vedas (mantra-hymns) and Sacrifices were ordained by that phrase in ancient times.

The phrase, "Om Tat Sat," along with the word Brahma, is the most sacred invocation of the God-head in the performance of sacred religious duties for securing the blessing of the Highest, dedicating the act (even in secular matters) entirely to Him (or It), the individual holding himself as merely a medium or instrument for its performance and not as agent. When actions are thus done, Karmic bondage is believed not to affect the individual. Taking next each of the syllables for exposition, the Lord proceeds :

24—26. Therefore acts of sacrifice, gifts and austerities, as ordained, are always begun by those who are learned in Brahman (versed in the Vedas) with the utterance of the syllable 'Om.' Pronouncing 'Tat' and resigning the fruit of actions (Vedic rituals), of Yajna (sacrifice), Dana (gift) and Tapas (austerity) as laid down in the ritualistic rules, those who desire Moksha (and not 'heaven') perform the various duties. 'Sat' is used with reference to the Real and the Good. In all acts of excellence, the word 'Sat' is used.

It means that it is a phrase of universal benediction—all good acts being blessed and Brahman invoked in the syllables for the well-being of all.

27. Sat is pronounced when a person dedicates himself to the performance of Yajna, Dana

trine of the Upanishads wherein Brahman-Atman, the Absolute One without an 'other' (or second), is declared as at once the One and the Many. Brahman is the whole Universe, comprising both Prakriti, which is Himself (or Itself) only objectively viewed, and Atman which is the unity of Life subjectively viewed. We thus have all the reality that we, as manifested forms, require in this very world (which need not be explained away as a big cosmic Illusion or *Maya*) having its being in Brahman Itself. We do not believe that the Gita gives any support to the *Maya* doctrine of the extreme Advaitins, either epistemologically or ontologically. The final goal of man, we again assert, does not consist in going back to the point wherefrom we started in evolution or in getting reabsorbed into the non-being of an Abstract Unmanifest Brahman; such a conception of the Goal, as a little thought would show, would be only a self-contradiction. On the contrary, the Goal, as we conceive it, is one of realising a positive state of being in which the present evils of our borrowed and mortal life cannot any more affect us. We must become 'true mediums' of the Supreme and thus fulfil the original purpose of the One to be Many. The *unity* of that attainment is so much above our ordinary notions of oneness that we cannot adequately describe it by reference to intellectual concepts—it must be *lived* to be known. Only then can one say 'I am Brahman.' Where and when this will be accomplished is a matter of speculation: there is no evidence pointing to the achievement of this goal so far. But this much may be said that the future of human evolution must be on such lines, and that on this very earth the 'ideal' of heaven will be the 'realised fact.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON SANYASA

This, the last and longest chapter of the Gita, in a way summarises the whole of its teaching, both from the point of view of the non-theistic Vedanta of the Upanishads based on the Unity of Brahman as the One Absolute God-head, as well as of the theistic outlook of the average man who requires to focus his attention and devotion on the God of his choice, the embodiment of his ideal, in order to enable him to endeavour to attain a higher status of being in the cosmos. This chapter aims at explaining the right attitude in action which man is to perform ; it does not advocate any cessation of activity such as is implied in the popular notion of 'sanyasa.' Man is bound to act in this world of living beings, which is the one reality that is relevant to us—as it is, we dare to say, the only reality that any metaphysic worth the name can establish. To live and to act are identical, and it is only in this world (and there are no other worlds) that the possibility of equipping ourselves with all the constitutional elements of Existence can be realised. Only thus can we find the fullest expression as the *manifested Forms* of the Supreme Spirit in accordance with Its 'Will to be Many.'

The Gita, as we have more than once observed, also shows that the 'original' Sankhya which aims at describing objectively how the complicated world of variety is constituted, is quite consistent with the monistic doc-

man strives to attain the Eternal has nothing to do with the religious Vedic Karma.

The Lord says,

2. Wise men have known that Sanyasa (laying aside one's secular life and duties) is the giving up of actions connected with the objects of desire, whereas Tyaga (abandonment or relinquishment) consists in the giving up of the fruit of all actions. So the discriminating (sages) say.

Whereas in Sanyasa all undertakings for objects of desire are given up, in Tyaga action itself is not given up, but only its fruit as a gain to oneself. In the case of Sanyasa one's duties in regard to religious affairs are not unambiguously mentioned as those that can be given up. In Tyaga, whatever may be the action, religious or secular, it is performed but with no attachment to fruit. One is thus not elated by pleasurable consequences or depressed by painful results. He looks on actions and their results as of no concern to himself but as belonging to Prakriti and as something to be assigned to the superintending Lord. This impersonal attitude is thus seen to be the same as that of the Karma yogi of Ch. III.

3. Action should be given up as evil, so some wise men say. Others say that acts of sacrifice, gifts and austerity as duties should not be given up.

4. Hear My certain opinion in this matter of Tyaga. Tyaga is of three varieties.

5—6. Acts of sacrifice, gifts and austerity should

This chapter begins with a question put into the mouth of Arjuna similar to the one put at the beginning of Chapter V. The author wants to describe in greater detail the nature of Sanyasa and Tyaga (which, however, he seems to make out in the end to be the same).

Thus Arjuna says :

1. I want to know clearly and distinctly what constitutes the essence (fundamental nature) of Sanyasa and of Tyaga.

The object of the enquiry is to know whether these two are really different, or if it is merely a distinction without a difference. Sri Krishna's exposition does not directly touch Arjuna's query, but proceeds in a different direction; He suggests that these two attitudes are differentiated according to the predominance of one or other of the 'modes' of Prakriti. The answers are indecisive, as to whether the ritualistic Karma is to be performed or renounced ; they appear rather as inchoate attempts of the author to reconcile the views of the Karma Mimamsakas with the general doctrine of Karma yoga.\* (Cf. Ch. III. 9—16). Sri Krishna's attitude, in the main, appears to be non-committal ; He merely asserts that, whether performing or renouncing, one should have no attachment ! This has long been a vexed problem for Hindu orthodoxy. But it has already been shown in the Gita that the Sankhya-Vedanta attitude by which

\* It is perhaps due to this vagueness that the Sankarite sanyasins leave off ritualistic karmas, while the Ramanujite recluses perform them, each according to their notions of Sanyasa.

some and involves physical suffering does only rajasic Tyaga and does not obtain the benefit of renunciation. The Tyaga of one who performs the prescribed action (it may be religious or secular) with the idea that it is what ought to be done and relinquishes attachment to its fruit, is regarded as satvic.

The tyaga attitude referred to in 2 is here exalted above 'sanyasa,' the real sanyasi being only a tyagi of the right type and not one who gives up actions and duties altogether. Cf. VI. 1—2.

10. The Tyagi who is satvic, intelligent, and has had his doubts removed, hates not unpleasant action nor is attracted to tasks because they are pleasant tasks.

He does what happens to be his lot whether the work that falls to him as duty is congenial or not. There is no special regard indicated here for sacrifices, etc.; what are referred to are only ordinary secular duties which should not be given up as unpleasant. This teaching seems to lend no support to the popular form of Sanyasa which involves giving up one's home and living on others' bounty.

11. It is not possible for embodied beings to give up all action completely. He alone who relinquishes the fruit of action is said to be a Tyagi. (Cf. Ch. III. 8.)

This verse seems to show definitely that the true Sanyasa and the right form of Tyaga are identical. From this it follows that it is the *grihasta* that is fit for Mukti even more than the sanyasi. If Brahma-jnāna is the

not be given up, but should be performed. They are purifiers for the wise. Even these actions should be done without attachment and desire for fruit. This is My certain and best opinion.

It is thus seen that Sri Krishna is against absolute Sanyasa. However, some confusion is caused by the indiscriminate use of the terms Sanyasa and Tyaga in the following verses. In this connection we must remember what was stated earlier in the Gita. Nowhere is there any support in it for complete Sanyasa ; life would be utterly impossible if we do not act.

In the search after the Eternal, mere religious duties like sacrifice, etc., were declared to be useless. Why should they be now advocated as duties that should not be given up ?

7. The sanyasa of the ordained actions (like the nitya-karma) is not proper. The relinquishment (pari-tyaga) of such actions from delusion (moha) will be called tamasic.

This looks like favouring the practice of the Vaishnava ascetics in this matter. But if one gives up these 'duties' with proper discrimination and knowledge and with dispassion, as the sanyasins of the Sankara school are expected to do, where is the error or harm ? The Vedic ritual of sacrifice, etc., is intended only for one who desires 'heaven' and not for one who desires moksha. Where, then, is the need to perform sacrifice, etc. ? No attempt is made to clear this doubt in this chapter.

8—9. He who abandons action because it is trouble-

combinations); the fifth cause is Destiny (or the gods, Karma, Providence, or planetary influences).

It is rather a curious theory of causation that is introduced here. It may have been introduced to integrate into the Gita symposium some ancient view which is referred to as 'Sankhye Kritante,' thereby giving it the dignity of a hoary antiquity. It is also noteworthy that no further elaboration on this set of causes is found in the subsequent verses or anywhere else in Indian thought so far as we know. We can only guess at their general import from the meanings of the terms used. The first, Adhisthana cannot mean 'Daiva' since Daivam is mentioned separately as the fifth cause. The word means 'basis,' 'site' or 'abode.' Hence it must be our body-organism itself, considered as a unit that acts, since there can be no action without a moving agency in the shape of a body. Next we have the actor himself, Karta, and this is the psychic personality, distinguished from the first cause which is the physical body. This actor is not, however, the Purusha, the 'Pure' one unconnected with the Prakritic causal relations. The third cause is denoted by a collective name and comprehends the set of Karanas or means, the physiological organs of action. In Sankhya we have five organs of action mentioned as the five 'motor senses' (Karmendriyas) analogous to the five Jnanendriyas. The reference here might be to those organs. The fourth, 'diverse forms of behaviour,' is too vague and indeterminate. It may mean the varied physical conditions, the external Prakritic forces; since the external physical world cannot be left out of account in this enumera-

end in view, there is nothing in the grihasta life, if the appropriate mental attitude of non-attachment is maintained, that need stand in the way of obtaining it and securing immunity from karma-bandha and freedom from re-births.

There is in the Gita so much about the *negative* aspect of the Goal, as 'freedom' from re-birth and karma-bandha, that the really *positive* side of perfection has been more or less ignored. Surely that positive goal is achieved when the individual *is established in Brahman and Brahman in the individual*; when this happens, in place of re-births there would be continuity of objective existence and in place of bandha there would be freedom.

12. The result of an action is threefold—pleasant, unpleasant and mixed,—for one who does not relinquish its fruit (for oneself), but not so (for one) who does (i.e., the sanyasi).

Here also Sanyasa means the same as Tyaga.

- 13—14. There are five causes for the fruition of an action as described in the Sankhya at the end of the Krita age (the reference here is to the original Sankhya theory, we must suppose) for the accomplishment of all actions. Know them of Me. They are, (1) the body (the basic vehicle or medium of activity, Adhisthana), (2) the actor (psychic personality, Karta), (3) the various Karanas (means or instruments of action, the motor organs), and (4) the different natures of things (like the Gunas and their material

on worry and suffering to ourselves. We must be like true sportsmen, looking on unperturbed by success or failure, pleasure or pain. However, we cannot say that the maintenance of such an attitude is itself Mukti. We have further constructive work to do (after learning the preliminary lessons of experience) for attaining the status of independent existence as real Muktas.

17. He who is free from egotism, whose intellect is not clouded (by any attachment or confusion), will not be bound (by Karma) even if he should kill all these men.

This statement, with its excessive emphasis, is rather a dangerous exaggeration of the doctrine of non-attachment, if literally interpreted. It was formulated for the benefit of Arjuna in his peculiar circumstances ; it does not mean that any one could with impunity take to murder and escape the guilt merely by maintaining unattachment. Firstly, it is not possible to conceive why a man imbued with Brahmic consciousness should feel any need to kill. Secondly, as we have noted earlier, it is not possible to voluntarily think of doing an injury or evil to another, when one is intent on treading the path of liberation. A man who understands himself as the Pure Self can have no motive to injure, much less to kill another. It is not any kind of metaphysical 'make-believe' that saves one from karmic bondage, but real Self-knowledge with the requisite purity of heart, where no personal motive to injure another can arise at all. All activities that we call evil are, as we have shown elsewhere, such as arise only out of a separatist personal consciousness and not from the consciousness of unity with the Supreme Self. The true knower of

tion of causes. The last cause, Daiva, like 'Providence,' corresponds to what we call Adrista, the unseen though very important factor which is variously described as the gods, the demons, Karma, Planets or even Time, and influences the fruition of our actions. Past Karma as influencing our present conditions may also be recognised as a very important factor; and Adrishta in general would cover the idea. The theory of Karma which regards the present life as one of 'moral' recompense for our past actions is not much discussed in the Gita, though re-birth and karmic bondage as what should be conquered are much to the fore in its theory of Mukti. 'Adrishta' in this verse seems to be almost the only reference to the idea, if indeed it is that. It is somewhat puzzling that Sri Krishna when advising Arjuna to fight laid stress on his 'dharma' and not 'karma' in the popular sense of something predetermined for him by his past.

15. Whatever action one does by one's body, speech and manas, whether righteous or unrighteous, these five are its causes.

16. That being so, he who without proper understanding thinks himself to be the real actor, is verily a fool and knows not the Self that is distinct.

Any identification of the individual Purusha with Prakriti and its workings would be like a man identifying himself with his robes or an actor with his role in a dramatic play. The self is only an *experiencer* and not the actor. It is for this reason that the Gita wants us to keep a detached outlook on our activities. Identification is the only bond by which we needlessly bring

Such is the so-called 'realistic' view of the ordinary consciousness of the normal mind. All varieties of Dvaita-bhavam, i.e., where an 'other' is postulated (dualisms and pluralisms) are of this rajasic type of knowledge. Theistic religions with a personal God as a separate entity, non-Vedantic metaphysics, Nyaya-Vaisesika, etc., come under this heading. Even attempts (however futile and self-contradictory) to combine the Vedanta of the one (Upanishadic) Brahman with theism would belong to this rajasic knowledge, not the satvic.

22. That which considers any single thing out of several as if it were the whole (confusing the part with the whole), and sticks to effects without (knowing) the causes (e.g., superstitions), which does not understand the Essence of things and which is narrow-minded, is known as tamasic.

Even in 'modern science' we have instances of narrow-mindedness illustrative of this tamasic type of knowledge, especially in relation to the phenomena of life and consciousness.

#### *Of actions :*

23. An action that is ordained, done without attachment, and not prompted by desire or aversion, and with no desire for fruit, is what is known as satvic.
24. That action is known as rajasic which is prompted by desire, is performed with an egoistic mentality and involves much trouble and labour.

the Self can never do a harmful act ; and conversely one who does an injurious act is not to be considered as having any knowledge of the Pure Self, but as a hypocrite.

18. Knowledge, the knowable and the knower, these three would induce one to action. Karana (cause), Karma (action) and Karta (actor) these three are the constituents of action.

Only three items of these are selected here for explanation. the rest having been explained elsewhere.

19. Knowledge, action and the actor are each three-fold according to the differences (in them) of the Gunas. As they are described in the Sankhya of gunas, hear of these from Me.

#### *Of Jnana :*

20. That Jnana is to be known as satvic which sees the One Indestructible Essence in all beings (the many), Itself undivided in their severality.

The reference here is to the Upanishadic Brahman-Atman that permeates the whole existence. This knowledge alone is true Advaita, bereft of all logomachies and intellectual tricks to explain away the complexity of its content as though its unity were merely a matter of absolute homogeneity.

21. Know that knowledge as rajasic which regards the various distinct forms as different, in the plurality of beings.

and what is 'nivritti' (the inward-turned direction to know one's self), what are the right and the wrong actions, what is attended with danger and what is not, what is bondage and what is liberation.

'Pravritti' is the natural tendency to 'move' outwards to possess external objects, and 'Nivritti' is the direction towards self-possession and self-knowledge,—the extrospective and the introspective view-points of the individual. The former tends to bondage, the latter to liberation; the former represents the non-Vedantic type and the latter the Vedantic type of attitude.

31. That intelligence which interprets right and wrong, what should be done and what not, in a manner which their true nature does not warrant is to be known as rajasic.
32. The intelligence which takes right to be wrong (or conversely), which is clouded by dullness (tamas) and sees all meanings (or things) in a perverse way, is known as tamasic.

The rajasic intellect gives a wrong interpretation to things while the tamasic takes a perverse view of them.

#### *'Of Dhriti :*

33. The firmness (analogous to Platonic courage) with which one keeps in control, by the yoga that is unwavering (one-pointed), the activities of one's mind, life-breaths (pranas) and the senses, is said to be satvic.
34. The firmness with which one holds fast to one's

25. The action done without any regard for relevancy (i.e., with no clear idea of its aim or end) or the consequent waste of labour, or trouble to others, as also action undertaken without regard to one's capacity or from delusion or confusion, is known as tamasic.

*Of actor :*

26. With no attachment or egotism, endued with courage and self-confidence, and unperturbed either by success or failure, he who acts is said to be satvic.
27. He who is prompted by desire, attracted to the fruit of action, inclined to be aggressive towards others, (unmindful of harm to others in the performance of the action), uncleanly and affected by joy and grief, is known as a rajasic actor.
28. That actor is said to be tamasic who is unprepared (or unbalanced), uncultured (of primitive mentality), bigoted (stubborn), truant (deceitful), indolent and wearisome and who is despairing and procrastinating.
29. Hear next of the threefold difference of intellect and courage (firmness and determination) due to the gunas, described (by Me) without any reserve and severally.

Buddhi and Dhriti represent the 'head' and the 'heart' of an individual.

*Of Intellect :*

30. That Intellect (Buddhi) is satvic which knows what is 'pravritti' (the outgoing activity)

satvic, engendered by the bliss of the wisdom of the Self.

It is the inner peace of the self in itself when its 'pravritti' tendency is turned into one of 'nivritti.'

38. What is due to the union of objects with the senses and at first appears sweet as nectar, though at the end it is bitter (because of its non-abiding nature), that is known as rajasic pleasure.

This is just the pleasure that arises from the 'pravritti' type of habit. It is *dependant* on the external world and hence impermanent.

39. Whatever pleasure produces dullness in the self, at the commencement as well as at the end, or arises from sleep, indolence and self-forgetfulness (as in the case of intoxicants), that is known as tamasic.
40. There is not any being, either on the earth or in the heavens among the celestials, that is free from these three gunas of Prakriti.

Next we have a digression, unwarranted by the context, on the duties and functions of the four castes, (somewhat like the verse 'interpolated' at Ch. IV. 13).

41. In accordance with the qualities born of their respective natures, the kinds of functions (activities) pertaining to the four castes (Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vysyas, and Sudras) are distributed.

Like the verse at Ch. IV. 13 which is introduced to show that the Lord, though acting as the Superintend-

duties, desires and wealth by attachment to their fruit (the traditional Dharma, Artha and Kama) is to be known as rajasic.

This represents a form of bigotry in the individual which makes him almost fanatical in holding his views as against those of the wise or those which are reasonable.

35. The firmness with which one adheres (persistently) from dullness (stupidity) to sleepiness, fear, grief, despair and pride (arrogance or self-opinionatedness) is tamasic.

The 'matta' is the vain person who has no knowledge himself and who would not wish to be advised or enlightened by others.

36. The nature of 'pleasure' is also threefold. Where one takes pleasure by (the force of) habit and obtains relief from sorrow, learn of this also.

This is apparently not so much a question of physical pain or pleasure (though there are many instances of our taking pleasure in things through habit, as in the case of some stimulants which are otherwise unpleasant) as of psychic propensities. The physical or objective effects are generally the same for all—a prick by a pin will be painful, for example, to all alike. It is the psychological or subjective element that is influenced more by habit, or determines what becomes pleasant by habit.

37. What at the beginning is bitter, but in the end is sweet as nectar, that pleasure is said to be

meant that one class should exploit another, but that all should live together in social health and amity, like the various organic structures in the body for the welfare of the whole organism. It is the '*innate selfishness*' of the animal in man that is responsible for creating superiorities and inferiorities among these classes whereas they should work in mutual good-will and respect. According to the Gita, all function (*dharma*) has a dignity of its own for the person concerned, and cannot be replaced by that of another. (Cf. verses 45 to 48 in this chapter, especially 45 and 46.)

The Hindu castes must have come into being *after* the Krita age (the age of primitive humanity) since only one class is said to have existed then. It was only after some 'evolution' that distinctions could be well-marked in men or things, for any useful classification to be attempted. There has been now so much of throwing together of peoples in India, in place of the ancient conditions of isolation, that a life ordered in accordance with the nature of the ancient conditions is impossible to live now. It is not possible to revive the ancient conditions. It almost seems as if 'caste' has fulfilled its function in India which now appears as the meeting point of all races from which a new humanity may very probably evolve. As in the Krita age, ultimately there would perhaps be only one class of men again, by the fusion of the whole of humanity on Indian soil, a fusion which India is fitted to effect by virtue of its age-long faith in the Unity of all *jivas* in Brahman. To stress birth alone, irrespective of the life a man leads, instead of emphasising the more important functional aspect of one's life, will amount to holding on to the non-essential elements. Birth and Dharma were

ing Deity by which Prakriti works out its modes, is Himself to be conceived as non-actor, so also here the purpose appears to be only to show how the dharmas or karmas are distributed according to one's inborn nature, by the energies of Prakriti. It is not so much a question of 'birth' determining the function ; it is, rather, the case that the function tells us about the character of the person, as to how he should be classed. The emphasis is on character and not on birth, and it is on this basis that the broad division of humanity under four headings is attempted. The Gita, it may be noted, as teaching the Path of Liberation, does not pertain to any caste or regard any caste as having any preference in the matter of following its instructions on life.

There is no authority in this verse or in Ch. IV. 13 for the view that the Hindu caste was a heaven-born classification from the beginnings of humanity. It cannot even be considered as a permanent social order. It must be taken only as a development in the course of social evolution, as something historical (whether in India or among other ancient peoples who had also somewhat the same kind of exclusive classes or divisions). Even in modern times such distinctions persist in countries which do not recognise caste, there appearing as class divisions or colour differences, and are maintained as jealously, if not more. There is no question of 'religion' in either caste or class, as some wrongly imagine ; it is merely a question of maintaining a *social* order, liable to changes in its history, where due recognition of individual differences in their psycho-physical characters is needed for a proper perspective of our social life and consequent co-operation. It is not

and kindred activity are those of one who is a Sudra by nature.

In none of these characterisations is birth brought into any prominence. The Vaisya has more of Rajas and less of Tamas, while the Sudra nature is tamasic (not immoral but a-moral). From this arises the difference in their modes of activity.

45. Every one reaches Siddhi (perfection) by each doing the duties that are in conformity with his nature. Hear next how one attains perfection when intent on one's own duty.
46. Man obtains perfection by worshipping, by means of the performance of his duty, Him from Whom all beings took their rise and by Whom all this world is pervaded.

In spite of the much boasted culture, knowledge and democratic claims of the present day, we have to learn much from the Gita teaching regarding caste-dharma arising from the individual's nature (not mere birth). The insistence on the dignity of labour and its division in the interests of co-operative social life show that the Gita contains 'moral' appeals that are valid for all humanity and for all times. It is especially to be noted that all labour, from whichever caste it comes, is of the nature of worship offered to God-head. It is He that is in all of us as God, and there are no superiorities and inferiorities from His unitary point of view. It will be clear from this why we are asked in the Gita not to attribute to ourselves any agency or actorship. In a highly metaphysical sense we are all one in Him who is the one Root from whom we have sprung into exis-

not found to go together even in Puranic times. We may ask, for example, how Vyasa's sons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu, were born Kshatriyas ! How can we then insist on ' birth ' in modern times ?

42. The life-activities born of the nature of a Brahmana are peacefulness (absence of aggressiveness), self-restraint (non-impulsiveness), austerity, cleanliness, forgiveness, straightforwardness (uprightness), wisdom, discretion (Vijnana or Viveka) and faith in God-head (or respect for traditional religious beliefs, asthikya).

The expression 'brahma-karma-svabhavajam' specially indicates a qualitative valuation, birth being secondary and thrust into the background. Brahma-Karma is not *janmajam* but *svabhavajam*. The qualities of a Brahmana are easily seen to be what arise from satva-guna. Wherever satva-guna is seen we have to recognise a Brahmana soul, whatever the birth. We may thus say that there are Brahmanas even in non-Hindu races. It may be that the Buddha denied the value of hereditary caste, because functionally Brahmana qualities could be found in non-brahmins, and vice-versa.

43. Valour, splendour, courage, dexterity and also refusal to run away from the battle (was this a gibe against Arjuna ?), generosity and ability to govern, these are the virtues of one arising from the Kshatriya quality (nature).

These qualities represent a greater predominance of ' rajas.'

44. Agriculture, protection of cattle and trade are the functions of the Vysya nature. Service

obtains the great value (perfection) of no-action by Sanyasa.

There is clearly no question of caste in striving to live up to this 'ideal' in one's life. True Sanyasa, as already explained, is not giving up all action, but doing actions with detachment, i.e., as worship to the Supreme Self; it is an attitude of mind and not an external form.

50. How one who (thus) has obtained perfection reaches Brahman (the Supreme Self), the state of perfect being arising from Knowledge, —learn it of Me in brief.
51. One who is united to pure wisdom (Buddhi, cf. Buddhi yoga) and controls himself with firmness (sthita-prajna or sthita-dhi), having abandoned the objects of sense, such as sound, etc., and laid aside attractions and repulsions ;
52. Resorting to solitary places, eating moderately, with speech, body and mind under control, ever keen on Dhyana yoga (yoga of meditation), and remaining passionless ;
53. Having cast away egotism, violence, arrogance, lust, anger and covetousness (the traditional six enemies of man) and being unselfish and calm,—such a one becomes fit to attain Brahman-hood.
54. Becoming one with Brahman, with the self serene, one neither grieves nor wants. One thus looks with the same eye on all beings; and obtains supreme attachment to Me.

tence. All our experiences, our trials and successes are ultimately His, in Whom they are 'pooled' to be distributed to us all as values. There is nothing that can be called individually ours. We have not yet attained any independent status that could entitle us to call ourselves 'beings.' in the sense of being eternally established 'reflections' of God. The spirit of Karma yoga and non-attachment is to be understood from this highly metaphysical point of view of God being the One Centre to whom all activities are to be referred from whichever source they arise. It is His Prakriti that is working and we are yet only embryos of individuality evolving in the womb of Nature. We are not the true makers of Karma.

47. One's own dharma (actions in conformity with one's nature) though devoid of any excellence, is safer (superior in virtue, or more conducive to one's welfare) than the dharma of another though it be of higher quality. One, performing actions determined by one's nature, will never acquire demerit.

Thus a Sudra doing menial service has not less merit than a Brahmana doing austerities, when he does his duties as offerings to the One Lord. Such is the Gita doctrine of 'the dignity of labour.'

48. Duty that is born of one's nature should not be deserted even if it should be lacking in merit. All works have their attendant defects (that is, they are shrouded by the gunas of Prakriti) as fire is shrouded by smoke.

49. One whose buddhi is unattached on every side, who is self-controlled and free from desires,

60. By your karma born of your nature (as a Kshatriya) you will have to do that which you now wish to avoid through a delusion, for you will be helpless in the matter.

This may be a 'suggestion' rather than a 'prophecy'! Next, somewhat soothingly and even coaxingly the Lord says :

61. The Lord (of the world) dwells in the heart of all beings. He moves them on (in evolution) by His power (of creativeness) as though they were set in rotation on a wheel (to evolve by the wheel of time).

Each individual, then, is made to pass in evolution through various experiences given him by Iswara, to gather self-knowledge and knowledge of Prakriti by which he should ultimately become a true individual or ego, a free agent, instead of being a phantom personality as at present. Hence our experiences are what are given by Iswara, and as such we should offer all our activities to Him as the one Source of all, without attributing to ourselves any agency or actorship in them. Our function is only to be and to experience without any attachment or identification.

62. Take refuge in Him alone (who shines in every one) with your whole heart. By His grace you will obtain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.

63. Thus has been explained by Me to you the wisdom (jnana) more secret than any other secret. Having fully reflected on it, you may act as you choose.

55. One thus knows Me through devotedness, knows who and what I am in essence. Thus knowing Me as such, one enters into That (Supreme Purusha or Self).
56. Taking refuge in Me and performing ever all actions (that pertain to one's nature as duties), by My grace one attains the Eternal and the Imperishable Abode.
57. Resigning by the mind all actions to Me (*i.e.*, while performing them by the body), devoted to Me, resorting to Buddhi yoga, remain ever intent on Me.
58. With your mind centred in Me, by My grace you will cross over all obstacles (to attain the Supreme). But if you, through Ahankara (egotism), will not listen (to Me), you will only go to destruction.

This appears almost like a threat to Arjuna in case he should disobey the Lord's advice to fight, after having heard what He said and showed !

The teaching here merely recapitulates what was already explained in the earlier chapters. This chapter, as we have noted, only summarises the salient doctrines of the Gita.

59. (And more positively) if adopting an egoistic attitude, you think you will not fight, your resolve will be found to be in vain (an illusion). Your nature compels you (to fight).

That is, Arjuna will be tempted to fight under a rajasic or tamasic impulse, and not under the satvic.

ed fool can think of offering to the Lord an evil action when such action cannot psychologically result except from an impure and ahankara-tainted mind. There is no place for self-surrender when one acts like a beast. It is the 'pari-tyaga' of the dharmas that is mentioned in the verse, and it means resignation of acts of 'religious duty' and taking refuge in Iswara, but not giving oneself to a life of abandonment to the senses, while nominally seeking refuge in Him. This resignation to the Lord represents the spirit of Sanyasa and Tyaga that was earlier explained. It is hence that in the three following verses the Lord warns against the handing down of this doctrine of Resignation (which He gave to Arjuna because He was so dear to Him and thus deserved to know) to fools and hypocrites who without any scruple parade as 'bhaktas' and act most disgracefully exploiting the higher sentiments of innocent people. The doctrine of self-surrender is diametrically opposed to a life of abandon and license. It is not moral and decent behaviour that was asked to be given up in self-surrender, but the conflicting religious observances which have nothing to do with the obtaining of Mukti. To one who has no purity of character, the Gita has no appeal to make.

67. This (supreme secret of resignation and surrender to the Lord) should not be revealed at any time to one who is not intent on austerity, who is not a bhakta (devotee of the Lord), or to one who has no reverence for the teaching, or who reviles Me.

One should not cast pearls before swine. The above conditions are negative precautions under which alone the instruction mentioned in 66 can be given to another.

64. Listen again to My supreme advice, most secret of all. You are dear to Me certainly and hence I say it for your welfare.

65. Let your mind rest in Me: be devoted to Me; let your action be as sacrificial offering to Me: do your salutations to Me. You will come even unto Me. I pledge My troth to you who are so dear to Me.

Next is the verse very frequently quoted as representing the essence of the Lord's teaching to Arjuna—but not as equally well understood.

66. Leaving aside all (religiously) ordained duties (dharma) take refuge in Me alone. I shall rescue you from all sins.\* Grieve not.

This verse should not be interpreted in isolation. It must be taken in the context of both the preceding and the succeeding verses. It would otherwise tend to chaotic results and contradict the very spirit of the Gita doctrine of Life. The verse does not mean a free licence to do what one 'desires,' irrespective of its morality or its decency, under the pretence of assigning the results to the Lord as part of one's Bhakti. On the contrary, in the light of the foregoing teaching, it should mean such complete surrender to the Lord of oneself and one's actions as one could offer to the Lord as worthy of Him Who receives. The actions should therefore be 'moral' and decent. No one except a hypocrite or a self-delud-

\* Such as those which are believed to arise from not performing the prescribed religious practices.

doubts. The whole composition appears to have been tampered with by unknown persons with their own sectarian prejudices (much prior to the time of Sri Sankara, the commentator, who accepted the recension of 700 verses).

71. He who full of faith even hears this (dialogue of ours) with reverence and without cavil will be freed from evil and obtain the auspicious worlds of those who have done acts of merit.

As if to assure Himself that Arjuna had properly attended to what was taught, the Lord asks :

72. Has this been well heard by you with pointed attention ? Has your confusedness, due to lack of knowledge, been cleared ?

Arjuna naturally replies :

73. My confusion is vanished. I obtain now proper recollection (memory) by your Grace. I am now free from doubt and firm (in my understanding). I will do what you bade me do.

That all variety of knowing is a form of 'memory,' as stated here, reminds us of the Platonic theory that our knowledge is a form of 'Reminiscence.' We are said to know only when the object to be known is already there prior to our act of knowing; it is not created or brought into existence in or by that act of knowing. If we distinguish the two factors in all knowledge, the 'given' as the sensory data and the 'meaning' or idea which we import into it (either erroneously or correctly), we find that the former is external while the latter somehow comes from *within us*. If we question how or why it so

68. Whoever declares this supreme secret amongst those who are devoted to Me does exhibit supreme devotion to Me and shall reach Me without any doubt.
69. There is none who does greater service to Me than such a one among men, nor will there be (one) more beloved of Me than such a one on earth.
70. One who has studied this (sacred) dialogue of ours on the nature of Dharma will be considered as having offered Me a worship of sacrifice like (as good as) the worship of knowledge (jnana-yajna).

Next is given a general benediction on all those who study the Gita, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, as a kind of 'phala-sruti.' Verses 70 and 71 certainly could not have been statements made by the Lord Himself, as though He anticipated that His private instruction to Arjuna would be published in the Mahabharata !

What may have been in origin a few words of advice and a short exposition of the principles of Dharma declared by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, seems to have been enlarged into a composition of 700 verses by the author, whoever he might have been (perhaps there were more authors than one) and given the form of a symposium of various philosophic views interspersed with a good deal of religious fancy, some of which is clearly out of place and unphilosophical, such as that in the X and XI chapters. We are thus left to conjecture as to what was really taught by the Lord and is pertinent to Arjuna's

have a common world of objects that all could know similarly. Knowledge that is 'subjective' would be a contradiction. This 'World of Ideas,' according to Sankhya, would be represented by the Cosmic principle of 'Mahat' of which Buddhi is the reflection in man.

In this verse 73, the author assures us that Arjuna was convinced by the Lord that it was right that he should fight. We doubt if Arjuna's original point of view was anywhere shown to be wrong. Sri Krishna's long discourses do not seem to prove that it was right for Arjuna to kill his kith and kin for the right of kingship (which, too, is not his but that of his eldest brother). The doctrine of 'renunciation and non-attachment' would be better exemplified in refraining from killing than in killing. Even a born Kshatriya can bear to be wronged; he need not resort to killing to right the wrong, especially when it happens to be only a personal injury, and that done by near blood-relations. There is no problem here of restoring a political and public order (*Loka-sangraha*) by Arjuna engaging himself in a fight with his kith and kin. He would at the worst be disobeying the orders of his eldest brother by refusing to fight, but would have a clean conscience that he did not bring about the death of his blood-relations. After all, the Mahabharata war ended in a national and racial catastrophe. Whatever result Sri Krishna may have intended to bring about by the battle, it certainly did not contribute to the peace or prosperity of the people afterwards.

Sanjaya comes in at the end to conclude, as he began, the Gita narration to the blind king; but he produced no impression whatever on the king, not even a

comes from somewhere within us, we have to fall back on a theory like that of Plato's, that our intellect somehow shares the nature of the 'cosmic ideation,' the so-called 'world of ideas' by which the correct concept of things is made out. Knowledge in this sense does not come from outside as though it were a copy of something external. Knowledge is a 'judgment' where the meaning-making is an act of our intelligence. The ability to know is to be assumed as the natural capacity or faculty of our intelligence which is, as it were, a spark of the great Cosmic Intelligence. If we commit error, as we frequently do, it must be due to the 'mechanism' of knowledge being defective in us, and not because the intellect as such is liable to error,—just as the erratic vision of the physical world, in the case of the colour-blind, is due not to the faculty of seeing but to the defective mechanism of sight, namely, the eye (which is only nature's or prakriti's defective construction). So when Arjuna says that he has now known because he has now the proper 'memory or reminiscence,' we are to understand his statement from the Platonic point of view. Even Vedanta has a similar conception of knowledge, namely, that the self is endowed with the faculty of knowing, and it requires a presentation of facts for the self to so recognise or know. This position does not mean that all knowledge of the world of facts is already in the self; if that were the case, no experience would be required. It only means that there is in the self the power or faculty to know, while experience is needed to bring this faculty into active function. If there be not such a common source of knowledge, like the World of Ideas, then knowing would be entirely a subjective process without any objective value, and we should not

## CONCLUSION

Thus our short study of the Gita comes to its close. The whole philosophic thought of ancient India is seen summarised in this small but 'great' section of the Mahabharata. Yet we must confess that to our mind the real problem of Arjuna's, why he should kill his *kith* and *kin* instead of withdrawing from the battle, is not answered at all. However this may be, the value of the Gita is not so much for Arjuna as for one who wishes to know what the ancient sages taught as the meaning and value of human life. The Gita expounds in a popular form the ancient Upanishadic doctrines about the Unique Integrity and Oneness of all existence in Brahman. We learn that the destiny of man is fullness and perfection of being—to be at once individual and universal by a direct and conscious at-one-ment with the Source of all. But, whatever is connoted by the ideas of Freedom and Eternity must also be realised as Fact in experience and life. The Gita tries to show that this attainment can be secured by non-attachment in our activities of life, by a transcendence of the petty personal and separatist consciousness to which we naturally seem to be confined. All forms of separateness represent only the *Prakritic aspect* of Reality. Separateness must be transcended by means of the other aspect of Reality, known as *Para-Prakriti*, the principle of Life, of unity and continuity, by which the world is held as in 'one' wholeness. The former represents our usual space-time correlations of the world giving rise to 'perceptions' in terms of what are known as the three

'grunt' of response. Even the description of the 'glorious form of Hari' did not move Dhritarashtra. As there was nothing said by him, we do not know how Sanjaya's statement about the certainty of defeat and death of his sons affected him.

Sanjaya said :

74—77. Thus I heard this wonderful dialogue between Vasudeva, the Great-souled, and Arjuna which made my hair stand on end (with joy). By the grace of Vyasa I heard this secret and supreme yoga (discourse) from the Lord of Yoga, Sri Krishna Himself, directly speaking. O king, remembering and again remembering this marvellous and sacred dialogue between Kesava and Arjuna, I rejoice over and over again. Remembering again and again that most wondrous form of Hari, great is my marvel ; and I rejoice again and again.

78. Wherever Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, is and wherever is Partha, the archer, there assuredly are prosperity, victory, plenty, and unfailing dharma. That is my firm belief.

Thus this discourse on Moksha Sanyasa (the non-attachment that leads to liberation), the last chapter in the Gita.

OM TAT SAT

The Gita, like the basic texts of other Schools of Indian Thought, is however mainly concerned with showing the way of *escape* from Karma and Re-births as though such escape were the only aim of human life on earth. The fear of these evils seems to obsess the philosophic outlook of the Gita teachings. There is no explanation given anywhere why human souls should have been drawn at all at first into this whirl of existence ; they could as well have been left unmolested in their original 'unmanifest' abstractness. To say that we should strive to 'escape' from existence here, without knowing the reason for the origination of things and of ourselves, would be only like the proverbial blind man's search for a thing which is not there. Karma and rebirth cannot be evils *per se*. They must have, as modes of existence and life on earth in the present circumstances, an ultimate value. They have not come into being merely for the purpose of our escaping from them, or for being 'philosophically' condemned. It may be that real existence as a positive excellence for which all living beings are striving is achievable only through a previous training in a series of 'pseudo-' (or borrowed) existences in the bodies that nature (Prakriti) provides us with. From dependence on cosmic forces for our being we must achieve independent being ; such is the nature of Mukti or freedom from bondage. The Gita, besides emphasising the extraneous nature of such bodies provided for us by Prakriti, also hints in a vague way at a 'Parama-Gati' (transcendental path of life) which may represent existence of one's own (that is, of the Mukta's). But nothing more positive about that state is described.

Freedom from karma and re-birth can be only a

dimensions—the discrete world of objects—which seem to diverge into (pseudo-) infinities on either side with no conceivable end or meeting of the extremes. The latter is the concept by which all this variety is understood as meeting ‘everywhere and always,’ by which Reality stands as a unique unity. This unity is sometimes imagined by mathematicians as a kind of ‘fourth dimension.’ But we are afraid that the numbering as a fourth would be misleading, giving rise again to the mathematical possibility of ‘*n*’ dimensions. On the other hand, we should conceive this unifying aspect of Reality as of no dimension at all ; it is, rather, the transcendence of any dimensional way of understanding existence. The concept of Brahman is intended to represent such unification. Where the individual *jiva* is able to realise in himself this Brahmic unity he has fulfilled the aim of evolution and attained the excellences of Immortality, Freedom, etc. To such an individual *jiva* the world no longer exists as it does to the ordinary man, as a ‘phenomenal appearance.’ Such phenomenal appearance is, if taken by itself, a false perspective of things (the so-called *Maya* view) where things stand as separated and unconnected, and the world appears as discontinuous. Cf. Ch. XVIII. 20—21. The real *Jivan-mukta* experiences the world as one unique unity of which he is also an integral part (the experience being untranslatable into terms of our ordinary three-dimensional consciousness), and where the ‘limitations’ of space and time no longer have any hold on him. It is the experience of seeing Brahman in all and all in Brahman. It will then be found that the apparently paradoxical descriptions of Brahman by contradictory terms is the only way of expressing Its Transcendental nature, since all opposites meet and unite in It.

condition of such a consummation, man should strive to evolve the consciousness of the utter unity of all in God-head, and live the life of non-attachment (Viraga or impersonalism) born of true Viveka (spiritual discernment)—but never think in terms of isolation. All the great teachers of the world taught the same path of life through 'Love,' (we would prefer the expression Friendship)—whatever might be the creeds of the 'religions' invented in their name after them by lesser men who, forgetting in the diversity of their personal and isolating interests the great truth of unity, fought deadly fights in the name of a God that they did not know, and a theology erected by their own fancy ! The aim of the Gita teaching, as we see it, is just to *prepare* us to gain a proper perspective of our existence here, and thus make us fit to tread the Higher Path of Real Life.

consequence of a higher attainment in the Life of Spirit. Non-attachment is only a means and not the end of human evolution. There does not seem, therefore, any metaphysical justification for the almost pathological fear of life on Earth that seems to run through the general doctrines of the Gita and other kindred literature. Real Mukti, as we have stated, cannot be a negative state. It must be what is positively realisable even on Earth. It must be a state in which the 'reflection' of the 'Eternal One' in each jiva is *established* as a fact when the animal-man is transmuted by a new 'birth' *out of himself*, through Yoga, into a Spiritual being, when memory becomes continuous and the body-form abiding. Such a 'Body-Form' (or one's individualised and Specific Space) can be the only true *expression* of oneself. External cosmic forces can produce no destructive effect on it, and decay, disease and death or the wants of hunger, etc., will cease to afflict the individual. Only thus the Sankalpa (idea) of the One to be Many would be realised and a true Jivan-mukta born. It is for the birth of such a one that the whole labour of evolution, one must presume, has been going on. In that consummation the whole of humanity will again be integrated into one Spiritual Entity which, if we so please, we might call by the single name God. In such an individual the 'connotation' and 'denotation' of 'being' become realised as identical, the 'ideal' becoming the 'real.' When such a One is 'born,' this world also, by His very presence, will be transformed into 'Satya-Loka' (Real World) and God's presence will be direct and immediate for all. The whole humanity, having completed its Evolution, will be freed from the 'evils' that now seem to be its heritage! As the one primary

## APPENDIX

### A Note on Karma

Karma, in the sense that each individual has a pre-destined schedule of life which he is bound to work out, is one of the main tenets of Hinduism, and it is bound up with the belief in re-births by which the individual jiva-monad is expected to fulfil its purpose of attaining perfection as a mukta or free soul. Since the goal is not what can be accomplished in a single birth, a vast and comprehensive experience for evolving knowledge in embryonic souls through various forms of existence is what is allotted to each jiva by the cosmic plan of Iswara. As such, Karma properly speaking belongs to Him, while the individual merely experiences. Hence it is said that the individual should not attribute to himself any agency or actorship, but should look on the various experiences as belonging or referring to Iswara who is his Parent-source. This attitude represents the first fruits of the individual's progress to wisdom through experience. Any identification of himself as agent or actor or any desire for personal gain makes him only suffer pain and sorrow (which represents the so-called bondage by 'personal' karma). This position of the evolving Jiva in the cosmic scheme is often mistakenly described as *Fatality*.<sup>\*</sup> But when we understand the

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\* The idea of Fatality indicates a narrow personal outlook on the experiences that befall one. When these experiences are viewed impersonally, that is, as given to one as the part which he should play so that he may contribute his share to the totality of experience of the



dedication of all our activities to Him) who is the One-Parent from whom we have sprung into existence, and the benefit of such experiences and knowledge is distributed in the end to every soul that is evolving in the group. We form one humanity in a sense that our ordinary knowledge does not reveal to us. That is why we are always asked to keep in mind that it is the same God that is shining in the hearts of all, and to act towards one-another in the light of such spiritual unity in which all exist; that is the highest ethical ideal that Vedanta gives us.

Closely associated with this conception that the whole of humanity now evolving is one unit, and that the individuals composing it share with one another all the experiences of all of them, is the idea of Mukti with its concomitants of Immortality, universal peace and joy of existence. If we understand how all of us have originated from the same Root-Principle of Life (which we conceive of as the one Iswara or God) we at once realise that mukti cannot be an excellence or siddhi in a single individual in isolation gained by him as a mere personal prize, but that it is something which gets distributed to the whole, so that the whole of humanity is benefited by the achievement. There should, then, be no disease, decay or death for any one on earth. In such circumstances, isolation, Kaivalya or Nirvana of an individual away from the rest of humanity is simply unthinkable, nay, it would be a variety of punishment (like solitary confinement) and as good as extinction. Mukti for one means mukti for the whole of humanity. A single individual immortal cannot live as a denizen on earth amidst a multitude of mortals without dissipating their mortality. His presence, like a catalyser of infinite

purpose of Iswara behind the scheme of lives, we shall not fall into the error of Fatalism. The individual jiva throughout this process is like a minor under the Court of Wards. When he attains majority-status, he will be handed over charge of himself when he can act as a free agent. Until then, submission to the guardian is the one course that is left to him. From such a point of view we can easily understand how the jiva's past experiences would influence his future. They are incorporated into the general plan of lives that the cosmic evolution-process has arranged for him; to that extent it would be true to say that the individual is reaping the fruit of his past actions. But it should be remembered that the contribution by the individual is only secondary to that of the cosmic plan. It is only to become ultimately masters of ourselves that we are evolving and not to remain perpetually as wards in the cosmos. Our individual freedom now is limited within the field of the greater plan of life, and cannot cross it lest we should bring about our own destruction by lack of knowledge. It is also to be noted that the scheme of evolution of all the jiva-monads works out as a *single unit*, so that in a highly metaphysical sense all our experiences are pooled together by Iswara (hence our

whole humanity, they appear as "Sacrifice" or offering to our Great Parent or God. Such is the spirit of Karma Yoga as opposed to the fatalistic outlook. It will also be clear from this that real "freedom of the will" can exist only for the Mukta and not for one who is undergoing cycles of births by Karmic determinations. The delusion that our will is free arises as a psychological notion from our unconsciousness of our past and our future. Metaphysically speaking, we cannot take ourselves as free as long as Karma or a pre-scheduled plan of life is determined for us by the cosmos from birth to death and to rebirth again. Astrology fully recognises this fact.



'capacity, would change the whole of humanity as well as the existing order of the physical cosmos. It is not as a private and personal gain that one can strive for immortality; the success of one will be success of all since all of us are only one Life. Hence, those who are popularly believed to have obtained 'mukti' and to remain as muktas somewhere beyond the earth, must be deemed to have not yet attained anything like true Immortality, but to be either 'waiting' for such an event to take place on earth, having effected a voluntary suspension of re-births, or to be returning to re-births on earth realising that no mukti or immortality could be found elsewhere and after death. That however is a different story. It is the selfish desire of the individual endeavour to escape from re-births by killing desires, that are responsible for their defeating their own purpose. If there be one who has realised Brahman on earth, then the varieties of evil that we now seem to be subject to will automatically disappear. It is this state of transformation of existence on earth that the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven' established on Earth ought to be understood as referring to. And it is for the 'emergence' of at least one individual out of the whole of humanity, who would be able to 'bring down' the Eternal Brahmic Principle as a fact on to the earth (instead of endeavouring to run away from life here) and establish It, that the whole life-evolution seems to have been working down the ages.